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Contents

AMERICAN LITERATURE AND HISTORY 775-6, ART 791, CHILDREN'S BOOKS 796, CHINA 795, CLASSICS 794, ESSAYS 785, FICTION 792-3, FRENCH LITERATURE 783, HISTORY 777, ITALIAN LITERATURE 784, LAW 779, MEDICINE 780, MEDIEVAL HISTORY 796, PHILOSOPHY 797, POLITICS 781-2, SOCIAL STUDIES 778, THEATRE 789-90

- GARRY WILLS
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ELIZABETH BARRY
KEITH JEFFERY
H. R. WOODHUYSEN
- Francis Parkman: *France, New England and North America* 775-6
Kerby A. Miller: *Emigrants and Exiles - Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America* 776
Towards a Definition of Heaven (poem) 776
Nigel Hamilton: *Monty - The Field Marshal 1944-1976* 777
George Vassilichikov (Editor): *The Berlin Diaries 1940-1945 of Marie "Missie" Vassilichikov* 777
Muriel Bulmer: *Neighbours - The work of Philip Abrams* 778
Eleanor Rathbone: *The Disinherited Family* 778
R. A. Duff: *Trials and Punishments* 779
David Pannick: *Sex Discrimination Law* 779
C. H. Rolph: *As I Was Saying* 779
- Allan M. Brandt: *No Magic Bullet - A social history of venereal disease in the United States since 1880*
Dennis Altman: *AIDS and the New Puritanism*
David Black: *The Plague Years - A chronicle of AIDS, the epidemic of our times*
Graham Hancock and Ewen Carim: *AIDS - The deadly epidemic* 780
Zhores Medvedev: *Gorbachev*
Christian Schmidt-Häuser: *Gorbachev - The path to power* 781-2
Tony Judt: *Marxism and the French Left - Studies in labour and politics in France, 1830-1981* 782
Pranay Gupta: *Vengeance - India after the assassination of Indira Gandhi* 782
Zafiris Tzannatos (Editor): *Socialism in Greece - The first four years* 782
Jean Cocteau: *Le Passé défini* 783
Raymond Queneau: *Journal 1939-1940* 783
Michel Mohrt: *La Guerre civile* 783
Camillo Sbarbaro: *L'opera in versi e in prosa* 784
Giovanni Pascoli: *Poesie famigliari*
Giovanni Pascoli: *Poesie e Poetica - Atti del Convegno di Studi Pascoliani, San Mauro, Aprile 1982* 784
Martin Amis: *The Moronic Inferno - And other visits to America* 785
Wheels (poem) 785
Behind the lines 786
The periodicals: *The Indian Literary Review* 786
Seventy-five years on 786
Letters on 'The Serpent and the Rainbow', *The Melbourne Manuscript*, Renaissance Printers, etc 787
- Commentary
Ludwig Van Beethoven: *Fidelio* (Royal Opera House) 788
Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon) 788
Hannah and Her Sisters (Odicon, Leicester Square) 788
- Helen Koon: *Colley Cibber - A biography* 789
James Morwood: *The Life and Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*
Peter Davison (Editor): *Sheridan: Comedies - A selection of critical essays* 789
David Underdown: *Revel, Riot and Rebellion - Popular politics and culture in England 1603-1660*
Michael D. Bristol: *Carnival and Theater - Plebeian culture and the structure of authority in Renaissance England*
Walter Cohen: *Drama of a Nation - Public theater in Renaissance England and Spain* 790
Kenneth Muir: *Shakespeare - Contrasts and controversies* 790
Harold Rosenberg: *Art and Other Serious Matters. The Case of the Baffled Radical* 791
Paul Taylor (Editor): *Juan Davila - Hysterical tears* 791
Paperback fiction in brief 792
Marian Engel: *The Tattooed Woman*
Katherine Govier: *Fables of Brunswick Avenue* 792
Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy: *The City Beneath the Skin* 793
Boule Habib: *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist* 793
Short histories 793
Michael H. Crawford: *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic - Italy and the Mediterranean economy* 794
Hans-Peter Stahl: *Properius, "Love" and "War" - Individual and State under Augustus* 794
Benjamin I. Schwartz: *The World of Thought in Ancient China* 795
Chris Given-Wilson: *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity - Service, politics and finance in England 1360-1413* 796
David Crouch: *The Beaumont Twins - The roots and branches of power in the twelfth century* 796
Robert I. Burns (Editor): *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror - Intellect and force in the Middle Ages* 796
David Lewis: *On the Plurality of Worlds* 797
E. Nesbit: *Tales of terror*
Naomi Lewis after E. Nesbit: *A School Bewitched*
E. Nesbit: *The Deliverers of Their Country* 798
Russell Hoban: *The Ratn Door* 798
Geoffrey Patterson: *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg* 798
Amanda Clarke: *Growing Up in the 1920s*
Nance Lul Fyson: *Growing Up in the 1970s* 798
Sales of books and manuscripts 799
Among this week's contributors 799
Information, please 799
Index of books reviewed 799

Cover picture

The march of the United States army, across the snowy plains of Utah territory, against the rebellious Mormons, 1858; originally an illustration in *Harper's Weekly*, April 24, 1858, it is taken here from *A Tale of Liberty: A documentary history of rebellion and political crime in America* by Nicholas N. Kuttie and Eldon D. Wedlock Jr (714pp, Johns Hopkins University Press, £32.20, 0 8018 2497 4).

The last lords of the wilderness

Garry Wills

FRANCIS PARKMAN

France, New England and North America
Two volumes: 1,504pp and 1,620pp. The Library of America / Cambridge University Press, £19.50 each.
0 521 26221 6 and 0 521 26222 4

Writers have always liked Francis Parkman. Brian Moore proved that as recently as 1985, when he published his novel *Black Robe*, based entirely on Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America*. Moore was alerted to the material by Graham Greene's admiration for it. But Parkman's influence has, naturally, been deepest in America. Mark Twain used *The Oregon Trail* (1847) when composing his travel book, *Roughing It* (1872), and he turned to the same author while completing his major works. For the expansion of "Old Times on the Mississippi" to *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain took a trip up the north stretch of the river, reading Parkman's account of its early explorers, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (1879). He had also renewed work on his stalled novel about Huckleberry Finn as he followed the explorers' struggle with their river-antagonist. After violent clashes on shore, Parkman's pioneers escape to tranquillity on the river. "Again they were on their way, slowly drifting down the great river . . . They resumed their course, and again floated down the interminable monotony of river, marsh, and forest." When white men first see buffalo, they are intimidated by "the fierce and stupid look of the old bulls, as they stared at the intruders through the tangled mane which nearly blinded them". Huck's Pap is just as distant in his sullen brutishness: "His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines."

The Sieur de La Salle's men journeyed farthest down the river:

Embarking anew on the dark and mighty stream, [they] drifted swiftly down toward unknown destinies . . . For several days more they followed the writings of the great river, on its tortuous course through wastes of swamp and canebrake, till on the thirteenth of March they found themselves wrapped in a thick fog.

La Salle's canoes did not turn back up-river till the Mississippi disarticulated itself into the Gulf of Mexico. He had found the elusive juncture, only to lose it again when he tried to sail directly there from Europe. "Now every eye on board was strained to detect in the monotonous lines of the low shore some tokens of the great river. In fact they had already passed it." La Salle, swept on toward Texas and his murder, anticipates Jim's plight when Huck's raft drifts past Cairo in the fog.

Twain was responding to *La Salle and the Great West*, one of Parkman's three masterpieces in a seven-volume series that follows European explorers and conquerors in North America over a period of two centuries. (The other great books are *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, 1867, and *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 1884.) The whole is both less and more than its parts, weaving together scattered episodes by constant reference to the European centres of commercial expansion. The control of the evidence available then (much of it brought to light by Parkman) is masterful; but if the writer's focus never blurs, the reader's does, especially in the penultimate volume (actually written last, since Parkman had jumped to his climax, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, the most dramatically inclusive and urgently paced, though longest, of the series).

La Salle, third in the series and the middle masterpiece, has a haunting thread of unity, the Mississippi, luring and disappointing those who seek it as something distant even as they are gliding along it. It also has one of Parkman's Natty Bumppo heroes, whose pain-heightened awareness makes the story more vivid. Like the others, La Salle is racked by disease even before he suffers blow after blow from external forces - snowblindness, the misunderstanding of his superiors, the betrayal of his allies. Under a fierce resolution, there is, in all these men, a deeper resignation to senseless fate.

His [La Salle's] lonely and shadowed nature seeded the following sunshine of success, and his whole life was a fight with adversity. All that appears to the eye

is his intrepid conflict with obstacles without, but this, perhaps, was no more arduous than the invisible and silent strife of a nature at war with itself; the pride, aspiration, and bold energy that lay at the base of his character battling against the superficial weakness that mortified and angered him. In such a man, the effect of such an infirmity is to concentrate and intensify the force within. In one form or another, discordant natures are common enough; but very rarely is the antagonism so irreconcilable as in him. And the greater the antagonism the greater the pain.

Even the silliest Jesuit or Indian is ennobled by torture in these accounts. Chief Ononkwaya terrifies his own torturers, crawling implacably toward them on the stumps of his remaining limbs. Indomitability is all. On the eve of battle, when General Wolfe quotes Gny's *Elegy* and says he would rather have composed it than take Quebec, Parkman intrudes: "None were there to tell him that the hero is greater than the poet." Parkman detested the Jesuits' beliefs, but admired their stamina: "The Jesuit is no dreamer: he is emphatically a man of action; action is the end of his existence." Take away the creed of Père Jogues and he would



Indians posing with Miss Helen Taft, the daughter of the new President of the United States, at Burlington during the Quebec Tercentenary Celebrations, 1908. F. L. Houghton's photograph is reproduced from Canada: The missing years (106pp, Hamlyn, £9.95, 0 600 50194 9).

become Parkman's highest kind of hero, like La Salle, "who, by a necessity of his nature, could obey no initiative but his own".

As everyone has noticed, Parkman's heroes tend not only to resemble each other but to become idealized versions of their author, who carried on his vast project despite a sickness his strong will both overcame and helped create. The Parkman heroes have their distinctive weaknesses, just enough to enhance them. Champlain defers to priests; Jogues is a priest. Frontenac is ruthless, La Salle shy. Montcalm trusts others too much, Wolfe too little. But they are all dreadful in facing impossible assignments, all uprooted men roving new worlds, all exemplars of American individualism. Parkman is one of the neuroathletic historians of America's nineteenth century (making up, with Theodore Roosevelt, the pulmonary branch of those who went West to improve their lungs and kill things). Blinded Prescott revelled in Peru's gold of the mind. Melancholy Henry Adams described the happy blunders of the Jeffersonians. Energy is admired a little fearfully by these men; but where Adams feared the energy was running out, Parkman feared it was running out. The pessimism of Adams poised him against his age. Parkman's pitied him against himself.

All his overt theory of history was smugly progressive. The best of the old world was prevailing in the new, English liberty over Spanish and French despotism; and American liberty over the relics of English feudalism. "Pennsylvania was feudal in form, and not in spirit; Virginia in spirit; and not in form; New England in neither; and New York largely in both." This ill-assorted combination could pre-

vail precisely because of its variety and adaptability.

This was the strife of a united and concentrated [French] few against a divided and discordant [English] many. It was the strife, too, of the past against the future; of the old against the new; of moral and intellectual torpor against moral and intellectual life; of barren absolutism against a liberty, crude, incoherent, and chaotic, yet full of prolific vitality.

France, by insisting on cultural orthodoxy, had deprived itself of a range of responses needed to cope with the frontier: "The clerical monitors of the crown robbed their country of a trans-Atlantic empire. New France could not grow with a priest on guard at the gate to let in none but such as pleased him."

For Parkman, America's fate was not decided at the Revolution, when the English colonies detached themselves from their original base, but in the struggle climaxed at Quebec in 1759, which decided whether France or England should be "mistress of the west". There "England and liberty" won over France and

mysticism" when faced with the practical tasks of administration in Quebec. She was at least better than Champlain's wife, who deserted him for a convent.

Since "the wilderness is a rude touchstone", it protects men from emasculation, something Parkman's heroes fear. General Wolfe, who can face battle coolly, is afraid of soft bedclothes: "Too much care and delicacy at this time would enervate me." Montcalm, though on the French side, is far in spirit from that "silken nobility, whose ancestors rode cased in iron" but have now become "the butterflies of Versailles", a place where "the two sexes were never more alike". In the 1870s, Parkman was a fierce antagonist of women's suffrage, arguing that voting Dalilas would weaken congressional Samsons - or, conversely, that they would play the role of Europe's "three women" and foment needless war. Parkman's heroes are sexually continent and suspicious of women. Champlain resists "the saintly follies of his wife". Wolfe, only briefly dissipated after a woman rejects him, decides that children are "the only true inducement to marriage".

Parkman is often criticized now for his racism, and it is true that he considered whites superior to Indians, just as he considered Anglo-Saxons superior to other whites. But he admired Frontenac's approximation of Indian ways, culminating in the moment when he leads a war dance. "The punctilious old courtier was himself half an Indian at heart, as much at home in a wigwam as in the halls of princes." Indians responded to him, "for his keen incisive spirit was exactly to their liking". The Indians, by resisting conversion to the French religion, had at least escaped servitude to the effects of France, in whose name Jesuit missionaries would have tamed the wildman of the woods to a condition of obedience, unquestioning, passive, and absolute - repugnant to manhood, and adverse to the invigorating and expansive spirit of modern civilization.

The Indians were trapped. They could not cease to be primitive without unfitting themselves for the rigours of modern life. But the same trap closes on Parkman's heroes, and on his country. The pioneers breathe a larger air than do the butterflies of Versailles; but to the extent that they tame the wilderness, they are destroying the conditions of their vigour.

Already, in pacified areas, men were going soft. The perennial Massachusetts judge, Samuel Sewall, is "matronly"; Benjamin Franklin is too concerned with "reckoning chances, counting costs, or heeding the scolds of ill-wishers" to be a true hero; Cotton Mather is both flippant and pedantic. Only George Washington exhibits a heroic energy in those brought up on the settled Atlantic coast - and he does so by striking westward before Braddock could. Without resistance from a fierce environment, men relapse into monastic courtier, bookish ways - "the error of those who, in their zeal to cultivate their higher nature, suffer the neglected body to dwindle and pine, till body and mind alike lapse into feebleness and disease". Even a Jesuit like Sebastian Rale led an adventurous life, fighting for "his" Indians against Puritans too desiccated to come and live with them.

But they were all, in fact, doomed - first the Indians; then the very forest that had screened them; finally, in quick succession, the tamed whose only virtue came from contact with the things they were undoing. While shrewdly mocking the dogmas of others, Parkman's prose continually half-confesses the inadequacy of his own stated belief in the triumph of reason. The mind can prevail only by undermining the body, with a consequent collapse of character. Civilization undoes itself. There is an air of bluff in Parkman's statements of the opposite thesis. In the charged air of his forests, the tread of danger we hear is not that of Indian moccasins, but of Parkman's own meaning stalking itself.

This conflict of feelings about the struggle for the American continent is what draws writers to Parkman, not his purple patches or stock romantic descriptions of nature. There is an edge of peril to his writings - not that of physical violence, but the risk of instant reversal in his thought, as easily upset as a canoe in rapids. To win is to lose in this risky see-saw world of vanquished victors and conquering victims. Achievement, in such a context, is an

act of depletion. The French and the Indians kill their conquerors from the grave. Parkman speaks of clearing the wilderness as a "murder" of the trees, and ghosts of the murdered will have their revenge. Indians, like Nigger Jim, hear voices in the night, acquire a wisdom from dreams, and whisper back to trees. "In the silence of a forest, the gloom of a deep ravine, resides a living mystery, indefinite, but redoubtable." Even the Jesuits have this gift of converse with spirits, as when a martyred priest teaches his replacement the Huron language: "The relation between this world and the next was sometimes of a nature curiously intimate."

Like Henry Adams after him, Parkman worked to put history on a scientific basis, using many of the same skills that made him a professor of horticulture at Harvard. His inevitable failure to complete that enterprise

(one he helped make possible) is most evident now. But it was the degree to which he succeeded that troubled him. He pushed on in the service of reason while doubting its efficacy, or suspecting that it was his own (as well as the Indians' or the Jesuits') enemy. In the process he kept raising and revolving issues that should interest historians as much as novelists. He is the principal example of Americans' obsession with space, with the need for room, expansion, and a remaining frontier. He shows that, long before the Census report of 1890, which so disturbed Frederick Jackson Turner, Americans had begun to feel claustrophobic on the huge continent given to them. He had the New Englander's consciousness of Europe over his shoulder, the inescapable thing he was escaping from. He embodies the American distrust of intellect, the admiration for sheer energy,

the hope that each individual can be his own norm. He realized that the struggle of different cultures was the cost of American history, and he feared they would wrestle themselves into mutual exhaustion. His chronicle contains swashbuckling adventures, like those in boys' books; but underneath there is a prevision of psychic disaster, as in this quiet horticultural apocalypse from the last book he wrote, *A Half-Century of Conflict*: going outdoors, fleeing the sequestered life, Parkman finds even the forest stifling, and is claustrophobic in the open air:

Young seedlings in millions spring every summer from the black mould, rich with the decay of those that had preceded them, crowding choking, and killing each other, perishing by their very abundance. All but a scattered few, stronger than the rest, or more fortunate in position, which survive by blighting

those about them. They in turn, as they grow, take lock their boughs, and repent in a season or two of some process of mutual suffocation. The forest is full of lean saplings dead or dying with vainly stretching towards the light. Not one infant tree in a thousand lives to maturity; yet these survivors form an innumerable host, pressed together in struggling confusion, squeezed out of symmetry and robbed of normal development, as men are said to be in the level sameness of democratic society. Seen from above, their mingled tops spread in a sea of verdant basking in light; seen from below, all is shadow through which spots of timid sunshine steal down among legions of lank, mossy trunks, loadstoed and rank ferns, protruding roots, matted bushes, and rotting carcasses of fallen trees. A generation ago one might find here and there the rugged trunk of some great pine lifting its verdant spire above the undistinguishable myriads of the forest. The wood of Maine had their aristocracy; but the axe of the woodman has laid them low, and these lords of the wilderness are seen no more.

The sufferings of translation

Oliver MacDonagh

KERBY A. MILLER

Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America
684pp. Oxford University Press. £25.
019 503594 1

Preceded by a steady eighteenth-century outflow and followed by another steady and much greater outflow in the two decades 1901-21, the nineteenth-century Irish emigration of 492 million persons to the United States was one of the great folk movements of world history. Its impact upon both the supplying and the receiving society was correspondingly heavy and enduring. The effects upon the United States have been explored energetically and fairly effectively by American scholars, especially in the past fifteen years. Immigration is an ideal zone for combined assault by the social sciences, and ethnicity has been the vogue. The effects upon Ireland have been generally ignored; where they have been noticed at all, the treatment has been cursory or crude. As for the interacting and dynamic effects of the emigration upon the development of the two nations, no one has hitherto seen them as worthy of systematic consideration.

Perhaps the leading merit of Kerby A. Miller's vast study is his analysis of the rebounding consequences of the exodus upon the still-linked millions on either side of the Atlantic. This involves him (though not necessarily to the extent which he evidently thinks it should) in trekking through Irish history from the Norman invasion onwards, the detail increasing steadily as he draws closer to the present. Such excursions may be defensible in terms of a hoped-for "general readership". But they clog the argument, tend to spawn minor errors of fact and add thousands of unnecessary words to a book already overlong. Moreover, the author's baggage is loaded with the fruits of Irish versions of the New Social History, whereby Ireland has at last taken her place among the nations of the earth: commercialization, modernization, proletarianization, hegemonization and the rest — and of course their French cousin, *embourgeoisement*.

Where, however, Dr Miller weaves the emigrant theme into interlocked American and Irish history, he is truly innovative and exciting. He adds a fresh layer to the already recognized ambiguities of the native and the Irish-American condition. On the one hand the Irish social system demanded the departure of one of three of its members in order to survive; on the other the émigrés felt guilt at their abandonment of their homeland. Correspondingly, Miller opens up rich new ground by his skill in matching the phases of emigration/immigration and those of both national histories. He shows the importance of distinguishing the main forms of nineteenth-century Irish emigration, locating them in the periods 1815-45, 1846-55 and 1855 onwards (with lesser shifts and regional variations within these forms) and then relating those, actively as well as passively, with contemporary Irish and American developments.

But it is not so easy to endorse the larger patterning which he attempts. Miller's central concern is the pre-1923 Irish-American's *mal du pays*, his alienation from his new surround-

ings and his enduring allegiance to his or his parents' or grandparents' place of origin. How is this homesickness to be measured? How pervasive was it among the Irish? Was it unique, at least in its intensity? In any case, how is it to be explained? The author, for one, believes that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that "the Irish — particularly Irish Catholics — often regarded emigration as an involuntary exile", that this "reflected a distinctive worldview" and that

both the exile motif and its underlying causes led Irish emigrants to interpret experience and adapt to American life in ways which were often alienating and sometimes dysfunctional, albeit traditional, expedient, and conducive to the survival of Irish identity and the success of Irish-American nationalism.

The roots of the two-view which interpreted emigration as exile are seen to lie in Gaelic culture, with its emphasis on the community as against the individual, the passive as against the active, immobility as against change, kin (let alone family) as against the person: even the characteristic structures of the Gaelic language expressed a conception of

life in which people were controlled or driven rather than responsible for their own destinies. True, Gaelic culture in all its aspects was in full retreat throughout the nineteenth century. But conversely, emigration began to eat into its surviving territories and include more and more of its practitioners in the closing decades.

Moreover, even its main domestic enemies (in the Millerite view) — peasant proprietorship, the regenerated Catholic Church and organized nationalism, in its constitutional and "violent" forms alike — strove to perpetuate old outlooks which both minimized the demoralizing impacts of change and cemented communal loyalties in the face of internal conflict and external enemies. Thus, emigration continued to be presented and generally accepted by the Irish as enforced banishment, implying a need for political revenge and the maintenance of loyalty to and identification with the lost and sorrowing homeland. Evelyn Waugh once apostrophized the Irish as an "adroit and joyless race": here we are presented with a sort of confirmation of this description in their rationalizations of departure. There can be no question that Irish-Amer-

icanism, especially in the years 1850-1920, was an extraordinary phenomenon or that it was emblemized by the rhetoric — and to some extent the real feeling — of exile and ancestral fealty. Nor can it be denied that the traditional Gaelic values militated against self-aggrandizement, individual decision and the abandonment of birthplace and family, or that Miller's explanatory construct is ingenious and, within limits, plausible.

But how far is it valid as a general critique of the immense and complex diaspora? The text itself provides many instances of Irish emigrants motivated by "unGaelic" values and world-views — primarily Ulster Protestants but also considerable numbers of southern Catholics. Revealingly, many paragraphs open with, or are halved by, the word "however", marking the change from a list of cases indicating one tendency to a list indicating its opposite. The book uses the American Wake (which customarily took place before departure from Ireland), as the supreme symbol of the traditional exile complex. But how many of the 5 million emigrants to the United States during 1720-1920 were thus "waked"? One in fifty? One in a hundred? What, for that matter, was the proportion of monolingual Gaelic speakers — or even the proportion of bilingual speakers — among the emigrants? Despite Miller's brave efforts to extrapolate from insufficient data, the answers are uncertain. But the probable unspecific answers are surely "minute" and "small", respectively. Irish emigration to Australia during the key years 1855-90 manifested only faintly and patchily the victim mentality and alienated disposition which Miller believes to be characteristic of the Irish-American. Yet the Australian immigrants were drawn, by and large, from the same pool as their American counterparts. Could it be that the destination was as important as the starting-point in fixing attitudes? Again, some of the auxiliaries he calls in to support the exile thesis, such as linguistics, seem doubtful allies.

The Irish-speaker can employ a phrase, *d'imhinch ag go Meirice*, which conveys the sense of purposeful action. However, in terms of the central thesis of this work, it is very significant that by far the most common way for an Irish-speaker to describe his emigration has been *dob éigean dom imeach go Meirice*: "I had to go to America"; literally, "going to America was a necessity for me." Thus, Irish-speakers choose a patient over an active way of expressing their emigration.

One searches in vain amid the cumbersome multiple references for the evidence to support the assertion about choice of phrase, let alone to be persuaded by the reasoning.

None the less the exile thesis must take its place in all future analyses of Irish-American emigration. It describes and explains some part — however its dimensions may be debated — of the great phenomenon. Moreover, Miller explores the dark side of the moon — the subjective experience of emigrating and being an immigrant — with great sensitivity and imagination. He uses a mass of direct testimony, emigrant letters and responses, most skilfully. Most winning of all, he writes with feeling, even passion, about the scars and sufferings of translation. The departing "children of circumstance", as one of his characters describes the host of "superfluous" Irish peasant sons and daughters of the nineteenth century, have been at last rescued, to an extent, from oblivion.

STEPHEN KNIGHT

Loyalties confounded

Michael Carver

NIGEL HAMILTON
Monty: The Field Marshal 1944-1976
996pp. Hamish Hamilton. £15.
0241 118387

The last — and longest — volume of Nigel Hamilton's massive official biography of his boyhood hero follows the pattern of its predecessors, with all their virtues and vices. The wealth of detail, culled principally from the diary which a carefully chosen member of Montgomery's staff was deputed to record from his dictation, provides an indispensable source for future historians about events as seen from the Field Marshal's point of view. Much of it throws fresh light on matters around which controversy has raged unceasingly. The author's adulation of his subject, so evident in the first volume, diluted in the second by his recognition of the megalomania which clearly afflicted Montgomery after El Alamein, has had to give way to a frank admission of serious flaws of character, which affected his judgment, particularly in his personal relations. It must have been galling for Hamilton to have been forced, for example, to criticize severely Montgomery's fateful meeting with Bradley during the Ardennes battle of December 1944, the results of which dominated the first half of the book. He writes:

Had Monty wished, he could have ensured Bradley's lasting loyalty and friendship by a display of gentle magnanimity, of understanding and good will. Instead he humiliated the shyest and most professional of American generals in his hour of shame — not, it would seem, simply from spite, but because he was at heart, as he had always been and would always be, a bully.

Although in this volume Hamilton is much more objective and even-handed in his judgments than in the previous two, it suffers, as they did, from his desire to ensure that no evidence that can be cited in Montgomery's favour should be omitted — for, if he does not record it, who will? There are still too many long quotations of original sources, written and verbal, and too much repetition. His argument is weakened by constantly repeating the same accusations against Eisenhower and his staff, Bradley and Patton. While complaining that the Ardennes battle, were actuated by personal jealousy and pique and allowed their feelings to warp their military judgment, Hamilton himself falls into the same trap.

The most valuable element of this biography is the detailed record of Montgomery's disagreement with the Americans about strategy after the victory in Normandy. "With the Americans" is more accurate than "with Eisenhower", for the latter at times appeared to agree with Montgomery, but was always

pulled back into opposition by his American subordinates, particularly Bradley, aided by the staff of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAPE), the principal British staff officers of which, Major-Generals Whiteley and Strong and Air Vice-Marshal Robb, come in for sustained harsh criticism. From August 1944 onwards, Montgomery urged that a force of at least forty divisions, most of which would have been American, should be concentrated in a thrust aimed north of the Ardennes at the north of the Ruhr. It should have priority, including that of logistic support, over all other operations; and the army groups involved should be under one commander, who he assumed (and the Americans suspected that he did) would be himself, although at one stage he offered to serve under Bradley, if Eisenhower accepted the principle of the strategy. Hamilton supports Montgomery's contention that, by failing to pursue his recommended strategy, Eisenhower forfeited the opportunity to exploit the victory in Normandy and to finish the war in 1944. Once Patton had started to head for Metz and Nancy from Paris, Eisenhower was unable and Bradley unwilling to restrain him and make the major American effort in the north. He did give Montgomery's 21st Army Group, and Hodges's First US Army on his right, priority as far as Belgium; but thereafter Bradley's effort diverged and was dissipated between Hodges's thrust towards Aachen and Patton's towards Metz and Nancy, so that the momentum of the thrust in the north petered out.

It is doubtful if Montgomery's claim, strongly backed by Hamilton, was justified. The chances of success would have been greatest if, after the capture of Brussels, Eisenhower, accepting Montgomery's strategy, had allotted to the latter's 21st Army Group the task of clearing the Channel ports and the Scheldt estuary, while giving the task of thrusting north of the Ardennes, to cross the Rhine north of the Ruhr, to Bradley's 12th Army Group, headed by Patton's Third US Army and supported by the whole of the Allied Airborne Army. Neither Montgomery nor Churchill would have liked that relegation of all the British formations to such a subsidiary and unglamorous role, the one to which in fact Crerar's First Canadian Army was restricted.

Hamilton is rightly critical of Montgomery's decision to launch Operation "Market Garden" to Arnhem. The original concept was limited to protection of the left flank of a major thrust by Dempsey's Second Army; but when the switch of priorities and of US forces after Brussels made that impractical, Montgomery gave way to pressure from the frustrated Browning in an attempt to force Eisenhower's hand. Its failure (in spite of success in reaching Nijmegen) gave a handle to Monty's American and SHAPE critics, who could deride his concept of bringing the war to an end by "a pencil-

like thrust towards Berlin". Neither before nor after Arnhem had that been his concept. He consistently pressed for a single concentrated thrust of at least forty divisions. Hamilton chiding, as Montgomery did, that such a strategy had always been successful, whereas Eisenhower dissipated his strength on a wide front so that none of the thrusts was strong enough. In any case one south of the Ardennes led to no vital strategic object.

That claim is untrue. In both world wars there were countless examples of single thrusts, however concentrated and strong, attracting the enemy's reserves and thus being brought to a halt. Given the forces that the Germans were able to assemble for their Ardennes offensive, it is at least arguable that, at any rate after the Allied pause in Belgium, they could have used sufficient strength to halt a single concentrated thrust, if not on the Rhine, at least into bridgeheads on the far side. The strategy which had been generally successful was one of alternating thrusts, delivering a strong blow in an unexpected area when the enemy's reserves had been attracted to and tied down by a previous thrust elsewhere. That was how the battles of El Alamein, Mareh (after the failure of a single thrust) and Normandy had been won.

The trouble was that Eisenhower had no real operational plan of that kind at any time. He wavered to and fro, giving way first to Montgomery's pressure, then to Bradley's, the latter knowing that he could not force Patton to accept any role in which his army did not play the leading part. If Bradley's Army Group was to provide the main thrust, Patton had to be included in it. The key therefore to Montgomery's strategy was to get Patton transferred to the north, and he eventually realized that, but did not succeed in getting Eisenhower to put it into effect.

Montgomery's tactless and arrogant manner, seen at its worst over the Ardennes offensive, defeated his own purposes. Once over the Rhine, he might have achieved his desired strategy of heading straight for Berlin, as

Hamilton points out, if he had accepted that two army groups could operate side by side north of the Ruhr without a single overall commander. Whether Stalin would have let Anglo-American forces reach Berlin before he had surrounded it, and whether, given the Yalta agreement, it would really have transformed the political development of post-war Europe if they had got there first, as the author claims, are quite other matters.

The valuable elements of the story after 1945 are the accounts of Montgomery's part in the pacification and resurrection of West Germany immediately after the war and his contribution to the establishment of a Western military alliance, first in the form of the Western Union and then of Nato. His quarrels with that rival prima donna, the French General de Lattre de Tassigny, and with his fellow Chiefs of Staff, Tedder and Admiral Sir John Cunningham, when he was CIGS, make sad, if entertaining, reading. Tedder and Cunningham being shown up as short-sighted opponents of a Continental commitment. In describing Montgomery's prolonged stint as Deputy Supreme Commander at the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE), Hamilton exaggerates his influence and overlooks the unsoundness of many of the views he expressed, which contradicted those he had earlier favoured and urgently pressed. His motive often seemed to be to draw attention to himself by *épaulant les bourgeois*. One of the most irresponsible was that West Germany, armed with tactical nuclear weapons, should be left to defend its own "inner border", while Nato troops in the west and Russian in the east were withdrawn, "creating mutual confidence as we go". That was in stark contrast to the prophetic paper he submitted to his fellow Chiefs of Staff on February 2, 1948, quoted on page 700.

Nigel Hamilton's three volumes provide a notable contribution to history and to the psychological assessment of a man who, for all his grave defects of character, became Britain's greatest military commander of the twentieth century.

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Zest and pluck

A. J. Nicholls

GEORGE VASSILTCHIKOV (Editor)
The Berlin Diaries 1940-1945 of Marie "Missie" Vassiltchikov
320pp. Chatto and Windus. £12.95.
07011 29794

The Berlin Diaries are an interesting and moving account of life in wartime Germany. "Missie" Vassiltchikov was the daughter of a Russian prince who had taken refuge in Lithuania after the Bolshevik revolution. When war broke out in September 1939 she was spending the summer with German friends and was therefore cut off from her parents. At the beginning of 1940 she and her sister arrived in Berlin to seek congenial employment. Owing to her command of English (to say nothing of Russian and French) she was able to work first in the German broadcasting service and then in the information department of the Foreign Office. "Missie" was beautiful, charming and headstrong, but not an ideal employee. She was always taking time off to visit aristocratic friends and relatives, dining and wineing at the best hotels or dashing about town in unauthorised motor cars chauffeured by interesting

young men. Small wonder that her *Spießbürger* Nazi bosses — already suspicious of what they regarded as a decadent aristocracy — took a rather jaundiced view of her activities. Her situation became really dangerous in the summer of 1944 when some of her colleagues, including Adam von Trott and Gottfried von Bismarck, were involved in the attempt to kill Hitler and overthrow the Nazis. "Missie" showed admirable, and indeed foolhardy, courage in visiting the prison where her friends were held, trying to get food and messages of comfort passed to them. The attempt was, of course, futile, as was a desperate move to save von Trott's life with a personal approach to Goebbels. Fortunately for "Missie" she was dissuaded from this latter enterprise by a film actress acquaintance who explained that there was no point in appealing to Goebbels's finer feelings. He didn't have any. These diaries do not offer us new information about July 20, but they do illustrate the frustration and helplessness experienced by those within the Third Reich who wanted to be rid of Hitler.

It is impossible not to like and admire this book's heroine, a young woman with tremendous zest and pluck, whose record of a ghastly era rings true across nearly half a century.

Between egotism and self-sacrifice

A. H. Halsey

MARTIN BULMER

Neighbours: The work of Philip Abrams
262pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50
(paperback, £9.95).
0521 320054

Nations can disintegrate. Why and when they do and don't is a central question of sociology. Thomas More united Utopia by denying privacy and property to individuals and placing them under the remorseless observation and control of their local community. The role of the community in national integration has interested theorists ever since, especially since the fall of the *ancien régime*. It became orthodoxy to hold that, between the (macro) State and the (micro) family, it is necessary to have "mediating structures" such as communities, neighbourhoods, civic societies and the like.

Interpretation of the transformation of Europe into an industrial society postulated the growth of urban working-class communities. In *Neighbours*, a book which Martin Bulmer has edited and extended from the writings of Philip Abrams, who died in 1981, Abrams postulates a further historical trend out of the traditional working-class community towards "modern neighbourhoodism". While the trend is not as yet conclusively measured, there is strong evidence for it and Abrams spells out its characteristics and correlates with clarity and without romance. A "densely woven world of kin, neighbours, friends and co-workers, highly localised and strongly caring within . . . tightly defined relationships, above all . . . of kin", can be found not only in Michael Anderson's nineteenth-century Preston but more recently in Richard Hoggart's Hunslet, Michael Young's Bethnal Green and Norman Dennis's Featherstone. Contemporary residual approximations appear here in Abrams's researches at the University of Durham. It is "more than a mythical beast".

Abrams's point, however, is not so much that this traditionally binding localism (which Durkheim remarked as peculiarly strong in Britain) is a thing of the past, but that it is an undesirable pattern imposed by external constraints. The isolated poverty of a mining village or a dockers' quarter implies everything that modern social policies try to escape. Such external conditions as absence of choice and immobility generate internal class homogeneity and neighbourhood provincialism. In the past they restricted horizons (which probably held back wage claims) and fostered a kind of collective self-help in poor local welfare societies before the Welfare State and economic growth began to provide support and insurance against illness, low income, unemployment and old age. These communities had real merit – the solidarity of workmates, the control of youthful wildness, the watchful self-sacrifice of wives and mothers, the taken-for-granted lending of goods and services. But they can, all too easily, be either romanticized or vilified. Sentimentalists may fail to remember their poverty and unfreedom. Detractors may patronize or condemn the dutiful virtues and sober discipline which, in a million cases, rescued order and simple civility out of straitened circumstances and unremitting insecurity. They exhibited high trust, densely knit neighbouring, and generous exchange. But was it a culture of altruism or merely a network of calculated exchange? Abrams seeks an answer, aware that the theory of social integration as well as the fate of social policies intended to promote "community care" depend upon it. He believes that modern neighbourhoodism forms itself out of conditions of greater mobility, social diversity, cheap state provision of services, material affluence and cultural choice. Such conditions do not constrain inhabitants into strongly bonded relationships.

Of course these modern neighbourhoods are not wholly different from traditional communities. The dependences between parent and child at both ends of a life still go on, as does the informing, controlling and norm-affirming role of gossip. But the participants are more mobile, have more choices, more access to formal organizations and, above all, to an enlarged sphere of public or political decision-making. People can now more easily create

personal networks, as distinct from accepting or enduring spatially imposed ones. A neighbour's demands, it should be noted, are likely under these circumstances to be either non-existent or expensive to his high-dwellers. So Abrams sees modern neighbourhoodism as "an attempt by newcomers to create a local social world through political or quasi-political action". The modern accent is on pressure-group rights where the traditional pressure was on communal and familial duties. The newcomer raises "the political voice of the local attachment".

The key content of neighbourly relations in the modern setting is, then, thought of by Abrams as reciprocity. His argument is questionable. On the one hand, he recognizes the existence (presumably subjective existence) of altruism, which he defines as a gift to the universal stranger, and he admires Richard Titmuss's assertion that a free, voluntary blood transfusion service fosters social integration. On the other hand, he is sceptical of the Samaritan parable if it is held to be normative for Handsworth rather than exemplary for Christendom. And he is impressed by the evidence of neighbourhood studies that gifts are made to particular somebody, not to generalized anybody. Altruism in real neighbourhoods is adulterated by calculations of reciprocity.

Moreover, he notices that respondents report satisfaction from the giving of neighbourly care, and, since they therefore are compensated for what they give, he wants to abandon altruism as an explanation and call it a form of reciprocity. It could be argued, however, that an important moral distinction would thereby be lost. Surely behaviour on behalf of the interest of others cannot be held invalid because it is thought by its author to be obedience to the will of God, or conformity with a tradition of charity, or "what my mother would have had me do". Different systems of exchange embody different levels of egotism and altruism. At one end there are market exchanges based entirely on egotistically calculated utilities; in the middle there are complex and uncertain multiple exchanges in a Trobriand kula ring or a council estate in Dagenham; and at the other extreme there is the self-sacrificing charity which seeks only the hope of reward in heaven. Societies dominated by these different customs of caring and sharing can reasonably be ranged along a scale of worthwhileness or desirability.

Abrams evades these sharp issues of moral politics by a cautious agnosticism and an ethical pluralism. This does not prevent a lively discussion. For example, he offers the provocative suggestion that good neighbourhood care schemes combine "a well-financed



The "Rock Against Racism" demonstration in Trafalgar Square, 1978. The picture is in David Widgery's *Beating Time* (126pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.95. 0 70011 2985 9), which will be reviewed in a subsequent issue of the TLS.

and administered statutory service using paid home-wardens working on a small patch basis with a vigorous grass-roots neighbourhood organisation seeking, among other things, to protect its territory against encroachments of outside authorities". The good neighbourhood thus combines a number of potentially conflicting moral motivations. The politics of community planning is accordingly sophisticated – unless the fate of the inner cities is to return to the grim simplicities of the working-class districts at the beginning of the century.

Some readers may be surprised by the appearance of a book on this subject by Philip Abrams five years after his death; but his life was cut off in full flood, at the age of forty-eight. In fact, two posthumous publications have appeared. The other one, *Historical Sociology* (1982), was finished before he died and was seen through the press by Richard Brown. *Neighbours* appears in a rare if unprecedented form. The Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust knew where to turn in the case of an unfinished manuscript – to probably the most experienced editor in the social sciences, Martin Bulmer. The result is a rescue for a Durham University research project through the novel device of Bulmer set in University typeface nibby stitching together Abrams in Times typeface. This printing artefact verges on the irritating, but in the end it works and is convenient to an odd circumstance of authorship. Admittedly the beginning – making definitions – is distinctly unpromising. "All studies argue that proximity is an essential and key attribute of a

neighbour"; few readers will put up with most of that, or even with the reminder that the word neighbour is in Old English high dweller. But Abrams moves fast from that definition to subtle explanation. He brings, invention and careful fieldwork to bear on the concepts of altruism, reciprocity and exchange.

The wider focus of *Historical Sociology* by one more usually associated with Abrams, by the microscopic lens of *Neighbours* seeks the same theoretical end. Through it he looks in new angles on his never satiated fascinations with social order. In the first book he was concerned to show that history and sociology were the same intellectual enterprise: both were interested in both social organization (structure) and human action in society (agency), both concerned with "structuring" and both compelled to make sense of structurally history. In this second book his explanation of neighbouring is again essentially historical. Abrams has put both historians and sociologists in his debt by showing that their academic trade unions have managed by their rhetoric and their postures to obscure what might otherwise have been commonplace. He has also thrown further light on the distinction between agency and structure (or person and role) by turning his close attention to the face-to-face, or back-to-back, relationships which we call neighbouring. To follow him is to emerge with a more sophisticated appreciation of the deeper, perhaps ultimate, sociological problem of integration.

Sickness of the wages system

O. R. McGregor

ELEANOR RATHBONE

The Disinherited Family
400pp. Falling Wall Press, 19 Christchurch Hill, London NW3 1JY. £18.50 (paperback, £7.50).
0905046145

Eleanor Rathbone was born in 1872 into a radical family of Liverpool merchants who were Quakers before becoming Unitarians. She was sent to Oxford to read philosophy. On her return, she took up the social reform and civic improvement to which her family had contributed for a century. Her own father had devised the District Nursing Service and had been a crusader for higher education. The main concerns of her public life were the status of women and the welfare of children. Her principal achievement was the conception and promotion of her scheme for family allowances which in 1945, one year before her death, became the Family Allowances Act. The success of that long campaign was achieved in the face of the twin handicaps for a Member of Parliament of being a woman and not belonging to a political party, though it was easier to be independent than as she sat for one of the university seats.

Rathbone's interest in family endowment had been shaped by her investigation of dock

labour in Liverpool in the tradition of Charles Booth, and by her reports on *How the Casual Labourer Lives*, published in Liverpool in 1913. This firsthand knowledge of the effects of poverty upon working-class families, together with the experience of creating an organization to administer separation allowances for the wives and dependants of soldiers and sailors during the First World War, led her in 1924 to publish her best-known work, *The Disinherited Family*. This still underestimated and unduly neglected book was an intellectually powerful analysis of a wages system which put working people on a weekly basis of security and created lifelong difficulties for them in maintaining their families. Where others sought to palliate symptoms, Rathbone diagnosed a disease. She made use of the extensive literature which showed how the arrival of children impoverished working-class families dependent on the inelastic wages of male bread-winners to pillory the wage theory of economists. "I do not think," she wrote, "that it would be an exaggeration to say that if the population of Great Britain consisted entirely of adult self-propagating bachelors and spinsters, nearly the whole output of writers on economic theory during the last fifty years might remain as it was written."

She denounced the assumption, common to employers and trade unions, that keeping a family was a "praiseworthy leisure time occupation" for the male sex. She showed how

presuppositions which employers and trade unionists brought to wage negotiations ignored the facts of the family lives of wage-earners. Of these, she thought the most important was the dependence of a mother "not on her own skill or productivity, but on a circumstance entirely irrelevant to her personality, on her husband's occupational value to the community and his power of extracting that value from his employer". "The case against the present economic system as it affects wives and mothers . . .", she concluded,

is concerned mainly with those anomalies in the married woman's lot which depend neither on the law nor on husbands, but upon the failure of the machinery of distribution to adapt itself to the conditions brought about partly by the industrial revolution and partly by our modern conception of what is due to a child – conditions which have changed her and her children from producers into dependants without making any provision for their maintenance except through the imperfectly realized theory of the family living wage.

Her solution required a scheme of social wage payments that took account of the number of children in the family, as in her Act of 1945, as a supplement to wages paid for work, coupled with equal pay for women workers.

The Disinherited Family was a seminal book. It is good to have a reprint with some ninety pages of vigorous and pointed introduction from Suzie Fleming which illustrate the immediate relevance of Rathbone's thought and policies for women and their families today.

Retribution and reformation

Nicola Lacey

R. A. DUFF

Trials and Punishments
320pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 308186

Anyone interested in moral, political or legal philosophy or questions of social policy can hardly avoid turning their attention at some stage to the question of the justification of criminal punishment. But the vast literature on the subject can prove to be as much a source of despair and frustration as of enlightenment and inspiration. A seemingly endless stream of retributivists and consequentialists of several varieties have lined up on either side of the net, and have proceeded to lob the ball of punishment back and forth in a long rally. Over the last twenty-five years, the work of H. L. A. Hart and others has pointed the way to a solution to the game: remove the net altogether, by developing a theory which incorporates both retributivist and consequentialist elements. This revision of the rules is itself controversial, however, and the debate continues.

In this challenging and eminently readable book, R. A. Duff offers an interpretation of the meaning and justification of criminal punishment which claims to break out of the traditional mould. Duff argues that we should see punishment as being addressed to the offender as a rational moral agent, and as aiming, in a non-instrumental sense, to express society's condemnation and to foster reflection, the realization of the moral wrong inherent in the offence and repentance. This conception of punishment is described as being "communicative, retributive and reformative"; it flows from an ideal vision of society as a moral community in which law serves the common good conceived on the basis of shared moral values. The argument is both conceptual and prescriptive: Duff argues that, for example, notions of responsibility and proportionality are internally rather than contingently related to the very idea of punishment; by exploring fully all such internal relations, an account is developed which draws its moral recommendation from the Kantian ideal of respect for persons as rational and autonomous moral agents.

Duff emphasizes the continuity between the substantive criminal law, the trial process and the imposition of punishment in society, and, equally, the continuity between the practice of

criminal punishment and our ordinary moral responses of criticism and blame. On the basis of the central Kantian value of respect for persons, he develops an integrated account of a criminal process which would entail real participation on the part of offenders, and which would impose punishments without violating autonomy. Duff's account of punishment is introduced by way of a useful discussion of various aspects of the criminal process, in particular the arrangements which are and should be made to cater for mentally ill and abnormal offenders and defendants. *Trials and Punishments* also contains a substantial contribution to such familiar debates as the nature of political and legal obligation and the nature of law, and here again Duff favours a conception which fits neatly into neither of the traditional (positivist and natural law) categories.

Like most theories which seek to accommodate the insights of traditionally separated principles in some new vision, Duff's will doubtless be criticized as just another form of consequentialism by retributivists and vice versa. This would be unfair: Duff's critical discussion of the traditional theories is incisive and persuasive, and his argument that punishment can be seen as a goal-based activity, but

one in which the ends are internally logically related to the means, has the great merit of ruling out the sort of trade-offs which are generally thought to be an unacceptable implication of consequentialist theory, while avoiding the counterintuitive retributivist position which would justify punishment irrespective of any forward-looking goal whatever. The main question which must be raised about the book lies in the gap between the ideal and the actual – a gap the significance and existence of which are confronted by Duff with admirable openness. His somewhat pessimistic conclusion is that in the context of modern British society that gap is so acute that current punishments cannot be said to be justified on his theory.

He also discusses the problems which arise about the extent to which we should cause injustice through our present criminal justice system, given that we believe that the injustice is the lesser of two evils, or is necessary as a means towards our future ideals. He acknowledges (although this problem is not resolved) the potential for corruption of the ideal system of redemptive and communicative punishment. Ultimately, however, what one makes of both the ideal and the path towards it must, I think, come down to a more fundamental

issue: do we accept the basic moral vision and in particular the conception of ideal human nature which underlie Duff's theory of punishment? If we do not accept the background Kantian ethics, and the view of human beings as potentially rational, free and responsible individuals in a strong sense, we will find it difficult to make the imaginative leap into a society in which there is a consensus about a sufficiently wide set of values to ground the sorts of institutions of criminal justice (and the responses to them) which Duff envisages. Moreover, even those who are sympathetic to the general enterprise may harbour doubts about the risks involved in such a paternalistic practice of punishment, in anything short of a radically utopian society.

Whether or not one accepts either Duff's premises or his conclusions, one cannot reach the end of the book without being forced critically to re-examine one's own views on criminal justice. One is also prompted to reflect on issues such as excuses in the criminal law and the design of criminal procedure, on which many other contributions to the debate on punishment have been unjustifiably silent. This book may not resolve the match, but it should certainly draw a large number of spectators to the court.

Expensive opacities

Katherine O'Donovan

DAVID PANNICK

Sex Discrimination Law

332pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.
019 8233814

Sex discrimination law is both technical and tedious, and has largely failed to evoke a response from those to whom it is addressed. In the 1980s women have demonstrated their disappointment with it by bringing fewer and fewer complaints to tribunals and courts. A combination of procedural difficulties, legal technicalities, lack of real remedies and an unsympathetic judiciary has driven out revolutionary fervour.

In the light of this, David Pannick has done well to write a readable, comprehensive and scholarly account of British legislation and case-law ten years after it came into force. He readily acknowledges certain lacunae in the law, which does not deal with major areas

where discrimination is practised by the state, such as social security, taxation, nationality and immigration. Nor does it cover private law regulating the family. It is ironic that official rhetoric upholds the principle of sex equality whereas the law itself perpetuates inequality. As a barrister who appears for both complainants and alleged discriminators, Pannick's own interest is in explaining the content of the existing law. He takes a broad view of his brief and covers a wide range of topics – the comparative material, particularly that from the United States, is a valuable addition.

Initially he sets out to explain the concept of equality and the content of anti-discrimination legislation, ignoring in the process distinctions between treatment as an equal, and equal treatment, and between equal opportunity and equality of outcome, even though the elucidation of these is vital if we are to understand what the law can do in this field. Pannick goes on to describe the impact of membership of the EEC on our sex discrimination law, treaty obligations having been a major source of

pressure in forcing successive British governments to provide some measure of equality for women in the labour market. Three chapters follow, on pregnancy, sexual harassment and sexual preferences, which are among the most interesting in the book. They point up weaknesses in the law, as well as in Pannick's own "insider" approach.

Take the question of dismissal for pregnancy, a detriment to which obviously only women can be subjected. Proof of direct discrimination requires comparison with a man, and tribunals have held that since men do not become pregnant there can be no discrimination – an absurd result that has now been overruled on appeal. But instead of attacking the complicated technicalities which produce such a result, Pannick merely tries to show alternative modes of reasoning which would allow a different finding. There is more to it than that, however: genuine difficulties arise in comparing women and men – when are biological differences relevant and when should equal treatment apply?

On the issue of sexual preferences and sexual identity Pannick concludes that the opaque language of the statute could be judicially construed to offer protection to minority groups. But there is no sign of this happening. On the contrary, as he admits, what we have is "legal intolerance at its worst". Pannick fails to appreciate that this stems not only from a lack of sympathy among judges but also from shortcomings in the legislation. A practising lawyer, he seems to believe that law has no limitations.

The final two substantive chapters deal with exceptions to equal treatment brought about by genuine occupational qualifications, and with the role of the Equal Opportunities Commission. Decency and privacy are the main reasons justifying differential treatment – the so-called "lavatory clause". Here again Pannick fails to offer any general theory about such distinctions. Nor does he give us a chapter on remedies, which is disappointing. The desirous remedies on offer deter complainants: discrimination is cheap but the process of complaint is expensive in both time and energy.

Sex discrimination law depends on the individual assertion of a grievance within a tight framework prescribed by law. There is much to inhibit complainants, as Pannick shows: political hostility, judicial ignorance and obtuseness, the legislation itself. But the problem goes deeper than he admits, for its roots are to be found in the relations between men and women. We need to understand these and how the law can intervene in them. No one is directly responsible for the general structure of society which produces a differential treatment of the sexes, yet anti-discrimination law operates on a basis of individual responsibility. Unless and until other programmes are implemented, and the law is reformed, women will continue to be discriminated against.

Everyday zeal

Laurie Taylor

C. H. ROLPH

As I Was Saying

333pp. Police Review Publishing, 14 St Cross Street, London EC1N 8FE. £6.95.
085164 0168

With an endearingly English blend of reticence and cricket, C. H. Rolph suggests in the preface to this collection of his articles that their present appearance might be best attributed to his sheer powers of survival as a weekly columnist in the *Police Review*; to having "carried his bat" in those pages for fifty years, "I forbear to wave my bat in the direction of the pavilion, since I really do not know whether anyone in it is applauding."

They should be. Rolph's genial liberalism and insistent fair-mindedness ensure that many of these little pieces (even those from the 1940s and 50s) still have something to say to their original police audience as well as to anyone else interested in the peculiar manner in which the law and its agents reflect, distort and sometimes flatly contradict, both common sense and ordinary morality. His typical technique is to use every day topics – a newspaper report, an extract from court proceedings – as a device for raising a legal or quasi-legal question: one simple enough to introduce in a single paragraph, yet rich enough to stimulate two more of lively speculation. "What is a 'common law wife'?" "Why should barristers wear wigs and gowns?" "How long should 'bail' last?" "Why

are policemen called 'pigs'?" "Who can be a member of a Nude Theatre Club?" "Why not abolish the witnesses' oath?" "What should be done about ticket touts?"

Although a thoroughgoing liberal, anxious to improve prison conditions, control the length of sentences, rationalize the law, Rolph is no soft touch. Fellow reformers who resort to polemic or fail to do their homework are firmly put in their place. "I've been reading the 1974 Annual Report of the best National Council for Civil Liberties we've got . . . As a member of many minorities and reformist movements, I've joined in the making of some very rude noises. But we've all tried to ensure that we were right on our facts, and the law . . . the N.C.C.L. is careless about both."

For all this reformist zeal, he is (as one might expect) a shade too ready to spring to the defence of the police. Well-informed observers found G. F. Newman's *Law and Order* series on television uncomfortably close to the truth in its depiction of systematic corruption within sections of Scotland Yard, but Rolph will have none of it. "What now," he demands, rounding on the BBC's argument that this programme helped to balance their many portrayals of honest policemen; "Titus Andronicus with a cast of baboons?"

Neither does our columnist fall over himself in his hurry to catch up with current ideas on drug use, popular culture, or women's liberation. You can almost see them nodding in agreement over their mug of tea down at the study room as he bustles in with such sentiments as: "I'm not a feminist and have always re-

garded the women's lib movement as slightly dotty" (even if he does then go on to praise women magistrates).

In common with Geoffrey Parkinson (the probation officer who writes the splendid "Talgunner" column in *New Society*), ex-police inspector Rolph is at his funniest and most irreverent when posing as a simple practitioner fallen among professionals or academics. "The Cambridge corridors and smoke rooms were crammed with distinguished people who knew each other so well that they went around without their lapel badges, and in conversation you had to trap them into revealing identities you were ashamed of not knowing."

Alongside such delicately executed glances, there are any number of straight cuts and square drives which dispatch obfuscating bureaucrats, hysterical journalists, and hypocritical politicians to the far corners of the ground. And occasionally, as when confronted by that small army of men who argue that some rape victims are probably willing accomplices to the act, he leans back and opens his shoulders. "I suppose they can visualize no other kind of victim than a woman violently struggling, kicking and screaming, and could never imagine the helplessness induced by terror or even insensibility. These men still exist and they move among us, taking up room, eating valuable food, filling in public opinion forms, and voting."

It is good news that these humane, intelligent pieces are now available to a wider audience. If a trifle worrying that, in these increasingly illiberal times, they are no longer part of the weekly diet for our police force.

The cost of ignorance

Richard Davenport-Hines

DENNIS ALTMAN

AIDS and the New Puritanism
228pp. Pluto. Paperback, £4.95.
07453 0012 X

DAVID BLACK

The Plague Years: A chronicle of AIDS, the epidemic of our times
177pp. Picador. Paperback, £3.50.
0330296132

GRAHAM HANCOCK and ENVER CARIM
AIDS: The deadly epidemic
191pp. Gollancz. £9.95.
0575 038365

ALLAN M. BRANDT

No Magic Bullet: A social history of venereal disease in the United States since 1880
245pp. Oxford University Press. £18.50.
019 503469 4

AIDS is a Copernican event in the history of sexuality. Although the disease has stimulated a plethora of scientific articles and journalism, few of these writings have shown an adequate historical perspective either on the treatment of venereal disease or on homosexuality. As a result, both medical and political responses to the global pandemic have been flawed. The popular books on AIDS which are now appearing are scarcely better. They reiterate the dismal character of the disease, and indict the mindless rancour towards dying people which it has evoked, but assume with Philip Larkin that sexual intercourse began "between the end of the *Chatterley* ban and the Beatles' first LP".

The instant accounts by Dennis Altman, David Black, and Graham Hancock and Enver Carim traverse common territory and reach similar conclusions, their only differences being in tone and emphasis. Altman is a university lecturer who has written widely on gay liberation and oppression; although personally engaged in the tragedy, he surpasses his com-

petitors in asstringency and conceptual clarity. His book betrays the fewest signs of hasty writing, and offers the most reflective and sensible insights into both homosexual society and sexually transmitted disease. As the only author to provide footnotes or index (both of real utility), Altman offers the best value. Black's book is expanded from articles which originally appeared in *Rolling Stone* magazine and he writes in the baffling, elliptical slang required of its contributors. Emotive and episodic in treatment, with an offensive title, *The Plague Years* has somewhat surprisingly won an award from the American National Association of Science Writers. Yet despite its egregious taste, Black's book displays sensitivity, and its research clearly caused him anguish. Hancock and Carim have written a more comprehensive study. They are scrupulous in emphasizing that AIDS is a disease which in Africa is predominantly heterosexually transmitted, rather than purely a visitation on Western homosexuals, but often lapse into excitable and slipshod prose, tainted with prurience, which falls beneath the standards which they themselves demand of journalists. Their book, although seldom irresponsible, is not beyond reproach.

Allan M. Brandt's social history of American venereal disease enjoys other distinctions. Magnificently researched, carefully written and throughout evincing compassionate but unobtrusive humanity, it is distinguished in methodology and originality. The concluding section, in which Brandt addresses AIDS, is the most cursory in the book, which indeed is concerned with much wider themes; but in his description of attitudes to venereal disease, prophylaxis, compulsory notification and treatment, Brandt provides many pointers to current practice. His evidence, for example, confounds those who urge that breaches of medical confidentiality are justifiable with AIDS victims, or that powers of forcible detention should be exercised; indeed the dubious motivation (conscious or otherwise) of such arguments is uncompromisingly clear from *No*

Magic Bullet. Brandt traces shifting lay and medical attitudes to venereal disease; his focus on the social definition of disease takes his book beyond the confines of clinical medicine to assessing the symbols of illness, and hence the ethical values of medical practice and public health policy. He sees disease as shaped by biological and cultural variables which affect perceptions of its epidemiological nature, and urges that only by understanding the way it is influenced by class, race, ethnicity and gender can its biological dimension be effectively addressed.

As Brandt shows, venereal disease was long "seen as an affliction of those who willfully violated the moral code [and] as a punishment for sexual irresponsibility". These illnesses were adduced as reasons for more restricted sexuality; therapeutic approaches remained secondary so long as "social uses of diseases... dominated medical and public approaches", and "persistent tension between a rational, scientific program and a behavioral, moralistic approach continues to characterise efforts to deal with venereal diseases". In Britain the parallels are arresting between the present-day refusal of some doctors and clinics to vaccinate homosexuals against hepatitis B, to which they are peculiarly vulnerable, and the opposition sixty years ago to publicizing Metchnikoff's method of self-disinfection with calomel ointment, lest removal of the deterrent anxiety of syphilis increase heterosexual activity.

The AIDS virus can either render its victims defective in cellular immunity or attack the central nervous system of the brain. It can be manifested in the form of Kaposi's sarcoma (a skin cancer with a survival prognosis of some two-and-a-half years), a lung infection whose victims have a life expectancy of about thirty-five weeks, or other opportunistic infections (with a life expectancy of eighteen weeks from diagnosis) such as brain abscesses, a parasite of the intestinal tract which produces relentless diarrhoea, and fungus that grows in the mouth, throat, or internal organs. The AIDS virus's notorious mutability makes the production of a vaccine particularly difficult; more distressingly, as the virus replicates in cerebro-spinal fluid or in brain cells, where it is protected from most anti-viral agents, patients who are diagnosed seropositive (antibody positive to the virus) but develop no other symptoms of illness may later develop neurological complications. Health services have not yet faced the financial and logistical implications of accommodating tens of thousands of young patients with chronic dementia or brain atrophy.

The fact that the first reported cases of AIDS in 1981 were exclusively in homosexual men affected responses to the disease. "The symbols that we use... dramatically affect... practice and policy", as Brandt demonstrates. Although AIDS would have received less attention and fewer research funds if first diagnosed among African heterosexuals, its identification as a "gay disease" has confused medical and political reactions. (Of the 275 AIDS cases identified in Britain up to December 1985, 245 were in homosexual or bisexual men; but as the disease spreads, this proportion falls, so that by now in New York at least 30 per cent of patients are not homosexual or bisexual.) All five authors argue that it was a lamentable chance that AIDS initially was regarded as a homosexual disease. The Reagan administration was slow and niggardly in responding to the health emergency, through some sense that its victims were sexual criminals who merited punishment. Some of the most stupid American cases of job or other discrimination against victims came from government agencies. As with earlier patients recalled by Brandt, AIDS victims suffered not only the physiological consequences of disease, but agonizing psychological stigma.

Ignorance of homosexual history has made reactions to AIDS more inefficient or irresponsible: even Brandt avoids any specific consideration of homosexuality until five pages from the end of his book. Yet gay historians such as Alan Bray, Barry Burg or Jeffrey Weeks, although occasionally tendentious, offer insights into the present medical catastrophe. Until the eighteenth century the popular English attitude to homosexuality was indulgent if derisive. When it had no distinctive social characteristics beyond the strictly sex-

ual, it escaped persecution: only in the eighteenth century, "as part of a broader crisis in the relationship of society and the individual" according to Bray, did a homosexual subculture develop in London, bringing persecution in the train of visibility.

Nineteenth-century secularization of religious sanctions, and the related zeal for scientific classification, transformed perceptions of inversion. Homosexuality came to be seen as disease, or morbid corruption, derived either from tainted heredity or corrupt environment. It was only in 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association (lagging behind their British colleagues) abandoned the definition of it as disease. This heritage of hostility between the medical community and homosexual or bisexual men remains profound, and recent objections to the Gay Medical Association advertising in the *British Medical Journal* show that it is far from extinct. A more explicit recognition of this historic distrust would have eased attempts to propagate "safe" sexual practices during the AIDS epidemic. A homosexual community which was less concerned to emphasize its isolation, which was (as in Renaissance England) relaxed about its sexuality and unwilling to be socially defined by it, would grow increasingly invulnerable to bigots, and might have escaped some of the obloquy which AIDS has brought.

In Britain, as Hancock and Carim show, some homosexual AIDS patients have received inferior treatment, or have been ostracized within hospital routines, and consequently have died prematurely. Research on disease linked to a stigmatized sexuality has caused anxiety and private conflict to many medical scientists. It is noticeable that although Altman, Black, Carim and Hancock all praise individual doctors involved in treating stricken patients, they have reacted with hostility - sometimes revulsion - to certain scientists engaged in curative research. The authors of *The Plague Years* and *AIDS: The deadly epidemic* are particularly incensed by the homophobia and egomania which they have met in the scientific community, and deplore the bitter rivalry which exists between the United States research effort (which has concentrated on epidemiology) and that of France, which emphasizes virology and clinical research.

Many causes have been suggested for the AIDS virus, ranging from the CIA's chemical warfare research to African swine-fever virus or the immuno-suppressant tendencies of sperm. Attention has centred on the "spillover" theory that indiscriminate homosexuality (whose attendant risks include hepatitis B infection, enteric parasites, anal warts, or amebiasis) exhausts individuals' immune capacities and lays them open to viral infection. This theory is questionable, as not every one with AIDS has had a plenitude of partners, but its effects on sexual practice and hence sexual self-identity are profound. It is often, as Altman shows, merely an insidious way of invoking conventional moral precepts in the guise of health needs. By reinforcing the popular misconception that homosexual promiscuity caused AIDS, it effectively pathologizes behaviour that in other circumstances would be innocuous, although, as Brandt proves, previous use of medical supposition to promote specific moral positions created fearful intolerance and neurotic frustration without improving public health. Instead of hortatory moralizing, it cannot be stressed enough that oral and anal sex are the most perilous for AIDS infection.

Ideally the books of Altman and Brandt should both be read. Together they give a comprehensive picture not only of the epidemiology of AIDS, but also of the cruelty which surrounds stigmatized diseases and stigmatized sexuality.

"Syphilis, Sexuality and the Fiction of the Belle Époque" by Elaine Showalter and "The Closet in the Closet: James and the Writing of a homosexual panic" by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick are two of the six essays edited by Richard B. Sewall in *Sex, Politics and Science: The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Selected papers from the English Institute, 1983-84* (Oxford: Johns Hopkins University Press. £8.50, 0801 3059 4).

The future in his hands

Archie Brown

ZHORES MEDVEDEV

Gorbachev
272pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.
0631 147829

CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT-HÄUER

Gorbachev: The path to power
Translated by Ewald Osers and Chris Romberg
218pp. Tauris. £12.95.
0850 430 152

Given the Soviet Union's role in the world and given that Gorbachev reached the top of the Soviet political hierarchy in March 1985, just a week after his fifty-fourth birthday, he could well be the most influential figure in world politics over the last fifteen years of the twentieth century.

Since 1982, of course, Soviet General Secretaries have been dying off fast, but that was a legacy of Brezhnev's policy of allowing almost the entire Politburo (and many of their subordinates) to grow old together while still clinging to office - what was euphemistically known as "stability of cadres". It seems likely that the years 1982-5 will be seen as exceptions to the general rule of Soviet politics that the party leader enjoys considerable political longevity. Physical longevity is, in the nature of things, less certain. Yet, if Gorbachev lives as long as any one of his five predecessors in the office of General Secretary, he can expect to see in the new millennium from the Kremlin, by which time he will have had the opportunity to exercise profound influence on his own country and its foreign relations.

The last statement contains four assumptions, all of which could be questioned: first, that the weapons of mass destruction capable of destroying life on earth many times over will not have been used by the year 2000 and that a *modus vivendi* (or perhaps something better) will have been maintained among the major powers; second, that the Soviet system itself will survive that long; third, that Gorbachev will not be removed from office, as one of his predecessors, Khrushchev, was; and, fourth, that the General Secretary wield significant political power and is not constrained at every turn by the collective leadership and the vast Soviet bureaucracy.

So far as the first point is concerned, Gorbachev's new biographers, Zhores Medvedev and Christian Schmidt-Häuer, are in agreement that he is a rational man and one who certainly does not seek military confrontation with the West. Even Medvedev, who is the more sceptical about Gorbachev and, in particular, of the idea that he might be a bold reformer, writes that he "will almost certainly use his power and influence more wisely than Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev did" and suggests that "he has a better intellect, better education, and is a more decent person than his predecessors". Such a man is not knowingly going to get involved in nuclear war, and those who employ the rhetoric of the "evil empire" should bear in mind just how much it is in their interest, and everyone else's, that the highest position in the Soviet system should not be held by an evil or irrational "emperor". That alone, however, does not guarantee peace. Gorbachev himself - in common with many in the West - has noted the possibility that the accumulation and development of weapons could lead to a situation in which crucial decisions "would no longer depend on the reason or will of politicians" but become the captives of fallible technology and also "of military and technocratic logic".

So far as the second point, the continued survival of the Soviet system, is concerned, neither Medvedev nor Schmidt-Häuer belongs to the apocalyptic school of analysts. They offer little support to those in Washington who - at a time when their counterparts in Moscow have pushed "the final crisis of capitalism" into the distant future - see "the final crisis of communism" as fast approaching. Both authors, however, envisage a gradual decline: for a Soviet system which does not make big changes in its economic mechanism, Schmidt-Häuer believes that Gorbachev is intent on making such changes, and in a useful appendix to his *Gorbachev: The path to power*, Maria Huber discusses the nature of Soviet economic prob-

lems and the shape which a viable reform might take. Medvedev, in contrast, argues that Gorbachev prefers "small modifications, administrative methods and economic adjustments to structural reform", though he keeps his options open by observing that Gorbachev has "not yet made his final choice".

The third and fourth assumptions may be considered jointly, for the extent to which Gorbachev is free of the threat of removal by his colleagues is linked to that of his power *vis-à-vis* not only the Politburo, but also the party and state bureaucracy as a whole, including the military. Neither Medvedev nor Schmidt-Häuer considers the possibility of Gorbachev suffering the fate of Khrushchev. It is unlikely to happen, for he displays more tact in dealing with people, a skill in building coalitions that deserted Khrushchev, and a willingness to use to full effect the powers of appointment and dismissal which accrue to the General Secretary more than to any other office-holder within

the first party chief to be also the youngest member of the leadership team. That gives him unique opportunities to promote to key positions allies who share many of his beliefs on policy objectives and style of rule. He has got off to a faster start than any of his predecessors in making such changes in personnel and, as these accumulate over time, his power is likely to increase, though his authority will (as already noted) be affected for better or for worse by the actual results of his policy innovation.

Both Medvedev and Schmidt-Häuer agree that a good deal of political power is concentrated in Gorbachev's hands. Where they disagree is on what he wants to use it for. Both give him high marks for ability, drive, determination and political and diplomatic skills. But they disagree in their assessment of the significance of the changes which have been effected thus far and of what may still be expected. Though neither would wish to describe



Leonid Glin's collection of spring coats at The Fashion House, Tallinn, Estonia. The picture is in *Comrades: Portraits of Soviet Life* by Alan Bookbinder, Olivia Lichtenstein and Richard Denton (176pp. BBC Publications. £11.95. 0 563 20416 8).

the Soviet system. Yet, if Gorbachev continues to pursue a conciliatory foreign policy and the United States presses ahead with its Strategic Defence Initiative, he will need to keep a weather eye on other elements within the party leadership who might be tempted to form an alliance with the military in favour of a tougher response. If he continues with his present domestic policy of seeking to streamline the entire bureaucratic machinery, including the abolition or amalgamation of numerous economic ministries and some Central Committee departments, he will undoubtedly arouse resentment among those who have been in command. If he goes further along the path of economic reform and makes more concessions to the market than the minor ones (almost exclusively in agriculture) enunciated so far, he will encounter opposition not only from vested interests within the economic bureaucracy of the party and government but also from those who see themselves as guardians of the purity of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Already Gorbachev has pointed to the existence of such criticism. In his major speech to the Party Congress in February he observed that there were those who saw "any change in the economic mechanism" as amounting to "all but a departure from socialist principles". While condemning such an attitude he nevertheless characterized it as "widespread". Thus, even he works within a framework of constraints. If he were content simply to be a consensus leader like Brezhnev - conciliatory towards every section of the political élite - he would be as safe from challenge as Brezhnev was. But he has chosen a more difficult course. His path would be smoothed if he were to have some concrete results to show for his active East-West diplomacy. Equally important would be an early improvement of Soviet economic performance. That, however, could come quickly only in the agricultural sector (though even there it is by no means a foregone conclusion); in the non-agricultural sector it will be, at best, a longer haul.

Gorbachev himself, however, is likely to last the course. While he does have Soviet constituencies to satisfy and has a far from completely free hand, there is no reason to suppose that he will be hamstrung by the collective leadership or even by the vast bureaucracy he inherited. He began his General Secretaryship as

what has been happening, or is likely to happen in the near future, as amounting to political pluralism or democracy. Medvedev is inclined to underplay the importance of movement from a less enlightened to a more enlightened authoritarian régime, while Schmidt-Häuer, in contrast, is willing to accord significance to a broadening of the limits of the possible within the Soviet system.

In some respects, Medvedev's biography has the edge over Schmidt-Häuer's. It is quite well documented, so that many of his points can be followed up in his references to Soviet newspapers and periodicals and a sprinkling of Western secondary sources. Schmidt-Häuer's sources have to be taken on trust. There is not a footnote or endnote in sight. Medvedev has provided the fuller study, though both authors have a good deal to say about "the times" as well as "the life" of their subject, for the strictly biographical material they have at their disposal would have made for much slimmer volumes.

Neither work is free from factual errors, a result, no doubt, of their authors' anxiety to be early in the field. Discussing Alexander Yakovlev, for example, who since these Gorbachev biographies were written has been promoted to a Secretaryship of the Central Committee and is now in charge of international as well as domestic propaganda, Medvedev predates by three years his exile to Canada as Soviet Ambassador, following his well-known attack on Russian nationalism in the pages of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in late 1972. A page later he places another interesting figure in the party apparatus, Georgy Shakhnazarov (who is also a prolific and innovative writer and President of the Soviet Association of Political Sciences), in the wrong department.

Mention of Shakhnazarov, who is rightly described by Medvedev as among the "more reform-minded" of Soviet "ideological workers", raises the question of whether Medvedev is correct in a more important and broader issue of interpretation - namely that "the Party apparatus has tended to be more bureaucratic and conservative than the government system". In my view, this is a fallacy, though a very common one. There are different groupings of opinion within the party apparatus as well as within the governmental machine, and those who wish to promote change are pro-

portionately at least as well represented within the Central Committee apparatus as they are in the ministerial bureaucracies.

On Gorbachev himself, Medvedev is less than fair to his subject when he holds him responsible for the relative failures of Soviet agriculture during his years as Secretary of the Central Committee with responsibility for that sector. The fact is that Gorbachev did not have the support of Brezhnev or of the relevant parts of the administrative machine to implement the kind of devolution of responsibility to the farms themselves, and to groups of workers within them, which he wished to see. It is over the next few years that his agricultural performance will have to be judged, for it was only in November 1985 that he was able to create some of the institutional preconditions for significant improvement. In that month, five ministries and one state committee with responsibilities for agriculture were abolished and replaced by a single State Committee for the Agro-Industrial Complex under the chairmanship of a close Gorbachev ally from Stavropol, Vsevolod Murakhovskiy.

Discussing Gorbachev's first important political patron and mentor, Fedor Kulakov, Medvedev misses his link to what he calls "the Brezhnev faction". One reason why Kulakov was able to become a Secretary of the Central Committee in 1965 was that he was known to Brezhnev through his lieutenant, Chernenko. Kulakov and Chernenko worked together in the apparatus of the Penza regional party committee in the mid-1940s. By 1971, when he became a full member of the Politburo, Kulakov had had six years of working closely with Brezhnev and the fact that he joined the ranks of the senior secretaries in that year, when Brezhnev was consolidating his power, indicates that he had favourably impressed Brezhnev as well as Chernenko. On Gorbachev's rival, Romanov, Medvedev is wrong when he says that on his appointment to a Secretaryship of the Central Committee in 1983 "he immediately became a more senior figure in the Secretariat than Gorbachev". Medvedev's reason for saying so is that Romanov had joined the Politburo earlier than Gorbachev. That, however, is to misunderstand the position of senior secretary (the holding of full Politburo membership and a Secretaryship of the Central Committee simultaneously, which carries with it broad supervisory overlordship of several departments of the Central Committee). The fact that Gorbachev joined the Politburo later than Romanov is irrelevant. What mattered was that he combined that full membership with a foothold in the Secretariat as early as 1980 while Romanov was still bossing Leningrad; thus, Gorbachev was the more senior of the two.

One of the most interesting speeches Gorbachev has made to date (and by far his most innovative before he became General Secretary) was his address to a conference on ideology held in Moscow in December 1984, shortly before his visit to Britain. Medvedev's misleading comment that it kept to "traditional orthodox lines" is based on the fact that he read it (as his reference indicates) in its newspaper version. The Soviet press, however, published rather less than half of what Gorbachev actual-

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Jack Hayward

TONY JUDT
Marxism and the French Left: Studies in labour and politics in France, 1830-1981.
338pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0 19821929 6

ly said and many of the most challenging and least conventional passages were to be found only in the booklet version of the speech, which was published in 100,000 copies and sold out almost at once.

Schmidt-Häuer's book is also not free of errors of fact and interpretation. It is an exaggeration to say, for instance, that Gromyko, with his move from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the headship of state, "went into semi-retirement". He is still one of the half-dozen most important people in Soviet politics, though both Schmidt-Häuer and Medvedev are right to stress the potential significance of the break in continuity at the top of the Foreign Ministry represented by the arrival as its head of a complete outsider, Shevardnadze, who is no less able but much more flexible than Gromyko.

Gromyko probably reached the zenith of his power during Chernenko's General Secretariatship. His influence over the content and style of conduct of Soviet foreign policy had been growing over the years, and a combination of Chernenko's relative inexperience in this field and his declining health meant that Gromyko was by 1984 a dominant figure. It is probably not coincidental that it was at this time that his first and most important patron, Molotov, was re-admitted to party membership. Schmidt-Häuer slips up on this, writing that Molotov was given his party membership back at the age of ninety-five under Gorbachev: in fact, he was readmitted at the age of ninety-four under Chernenko in the summer of 1984.

The context in which Schmidt-Häuer makes this error is that of drawing up a balance-sheet of the pro and anti-Stalin (pro-reform) phenomena observable during Gorbachev's short period as party leader. He is right to see the balance as tipping much more in the latter than the former direction, and while the extension of the boundaries of the permissible in publishing policy and cultural life gives opportunities also to reactionary voices, reformers are speaking out more boldly – and finding a platform more successfully – than at any time since the early to mid-1960s. How far this will develop, and which of the various voices competing for Gorbachev's ear will ultimately get the most sympathetic hearing, are among the more important matters on the political agenda in what could be a new era in Soviet politics.

Tony Judt specifically declares that he is more concerned to examine the historic role of the "vulgar Marxism" of partisan Marxists than abstruse attempts at grand theory. So it may be worth recalling an exchange that is said to have taken place at a Labour Party meeting at which Harold Laski was speaking. Interrupted from the floor by a heckler who started his intervention with the consecrated words: "Marx said . . .", Laski imperturbably retorted: "You interpret Marx in your way and I in his." Rather than joining in such rhetorical one-upmanship, Judt is concerned to explain – in the French context – the failure of Marxism to fulfil its main aspiration: to change the world in a desired direction. The aftermath of the March 1986 elections in France, characterized by the defeat of the Socialists and the rout of the Communists, is a particularly apposite moment at which to try to understand the secular trends: the temporary setback to reformist socialism and the remorseless decline of revolutionary communism in the country which has above all others exemplified the so-called revolutionary tradition.

Rather than providing a chronological account of the historical process by which the French Left reached a situation in which Marxism can be regarded as history rather than actuality, Judt offers a reinterpretation of that process. It takes the form of filling gaps in the historical record, deliberately avoiding the spectacular crisis years associated with 1905, 1914, 1920, 1936, 1947, 1958, 1972 or 1977, which have tended hitherto to monopolize concern. Through an "interrogation of the commonplace", he investigates the subterranean processes which link them and impart an enduring meaning to eventual occasions, with the intention of producing "a demythologized history of French labour".

Judt characterizes being on the Left in France as above all sharing a style of talking about past, present and future politics, derived

from the French Revolution. Like other scholars, he regards the French Right as counter-revolutionary, reacting against the Left. This may be too simple a way of dismissing the religious, elitist and more recently capitalist values which have affirmed positive and not simply negative political norms. He is on firmer ground when he argues that the French Left has been badly split in its attitude to the state and legitimate authority, notably over whether to accept the broader-based, "bourgeois" republican tradition. This has placed the leaders of the would-be Marxist-inspired labour movement not merely in conflict with the electoral politics of parliamentary socialism but with the industrial politics of anarcho-syndicalism.

At the end of a substantial essay on the nineteenth-century French labour movement, which plays down the Marxist preoccupation with the workplace and work-related attitudes, Judt explains the problems of the Socialists and then the PCF as those of seeking to act as revolutionary parties within parliamentary institutions. This predicament was compounded by the fact that industrial and political militancy were both combined with weakness. Judt elucidates the problem by showing that what has been described as an unequivocal and indivisible revolutionary tradition has three components. First, there is the revolutionary model of power being transferred by a specific act, which repeated defeats led the more perspicacious theorists like Proudhon to reformulate as "permanent revolution" or revolution as a process. Second, there is the model of revolutionary power being wielded by an indivisible dictatorship on behalf of the people, with the 1871 Paris Commune being the last credible attempt

at such a dictatorship. Finally, the attempt to justify such authoritarianism by appealing to an indivisible "people" – more or less identified with the "workers" – has become increasingly unrealistic as it is clear that a pluralistic social reality does not correspond with the unitary myth. By 1980 André Gortz could belatedly publish a book entitled *Adieu à prolétariat*.

After a shorter essay on the French Socialist Party from 1920 to 1936, in which – in late Blum's terms – the Socialists are shown to have opted for an "exercise of power" strategy that culminated in the 1981-6 parliament, while the PCF chose the impotence of an impossible "conquest of power", Judt rounds upon French Marxist theorizing in the 1945-75 period. Althusser is the principal butt of this onslaught in a chapter written with an enviable combination of sardonic wit, intellectual mastery and moral revulsion. This deadly piece of denunciation work is followed by an essay in French electoral geography and sociology, which is inclined to exaggerate the significance of the 1981 elections but suggests why the Socialists are capable in future of becoming the alternative government. One must welcome the boldness of a modern historian who is prepared to extend his analysis into a political setting of the 1980s. While Judt has not yet quite attained the mastery of French left-wing history of George Lichtheim (to whose memory his book is dedicated), he has written a well-informed and persuasive reinterpretation of the French Left that is now receding beyond recall, except for historians. This book helps us understand that while a moribund Marxist communism lingers on, democratic socialism is still struggling to find its feet in France.

Change and change again

Nigel Clive

ZAFIRIS TZANNATOS (Editor)
Socialism in Greece: The first four years
210pp. Gower. £16.50.
0 566 05097 8

Following the electoral victory in 1981 of Andreas Papandreu's seven-year-old Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) which brought Greece its first ever socialist government, the Association of Greek University Teachers and Research Staff in Western Europe decided to organize a conference to study PASOK's early achievements and the further objectives, enshrined in the vote-winning slogan "Change", on which it had been swept to power. This book contains most of the papers given at the conference. Unfortunately, the section on foreign policy is missing. Hence, there is no exposure of Papandreu's consistent unpredictability over, for instance, the EEC, which he used to describe as an impediment to an independent, national economic policy, whereas now he insists on a special relationship for Greece within the EEC. His present stance is hardly surprising in view of Greece's hefty net cash benefit from the EEC, most of which has been channelled to the farming community. All eighteen contributors have written their papers in English; but their texts, mainly on socio-economic problems, would have benefited from an English editor.

As so often at such conferences, the quality of the contributions is rather uneven. Zafiris Tzannatos sets the scene with an opening chapter on "Socialism in Greece: Past and present", which races through the country's political evolution in the last forty years. He pins the complimentary label of "the Left" on the Communist-controlled wartime Resistance, while "the Right" is said to have dominated the majority of governments after the end of the civil war in 1949, until the emergence of PASOK. Fortunately, this oversimplified terminology is avoided in Christos Lyrintzis's more informative and persuasive analysis of the rise of PASOK and the emergence of a new political personnel. His account of the new force in Greek politics with new organizational practices draws on his research into the social origins and age groups of PASOK's representatives in Parliament and its Central Com-

mittee. He shows how this younger generation was politicized during the Centre Union's campaigns in the mid-1960s, together with those who entered Greek politics during the resistance against the Junta from 1967 to 1974. The book has made PASOK's ruling personnel markedly different from their counterparts in the conservative New Democracy Party. But PASOK has successfully rejected the traditional captive clientele and personal electoral fiefs, which have for so long dominated Greek political life. Lyrintzis raises the key question of how PASOK will deal with the present system of party-directed patronage.

Justifiably, several of the contributors have highlighted Papandreu's major achievements in the social reforms he has introduced, which were long overdue, notably the granting of equal legal rights to women for the first time, abolition of the marriage dowry, introduction of civil divorce and reduction of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. They have also pointed to PASOK's inheritance of an antiquated system of higher education and the improvements that have been introduced in the new university structure, the start of a National Health Service and the development of primary health care. The only straight criticism of PASOK's performance comes from George Drakos, a former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Greece. He has identified the two main spots of socialist economic policy as being uncertainty as to which firms are to be socialized and the proliferation of state organizations. He corrects supposedly undesirable situations. His pessimistic forecasts have been proved wrong: in October 1985 Papandreu made a dramatic U-turn in policy, introducing a package of economic stabilization measures, valuing the drachma by 15 per cent, imposing import restrictions and a virtual wage freeze. These developments are necessarily beyond the time limits of this book, but they are reflected in the recent report of the Government of the Bank of Greece, which marked the 25 per cent inflation rate as three to four times higher than the EEC average, and recorded a 10 per cent increase in the current deficit to 3.3 billion drachmas. Greece, which according to the World Bank has the largest per capita foreign debt, still has some way to go, whether under Papandreu or his conservative opponent, before the financial system can equal that of other Western European nations.

Journals of a jobbing aesthete

Michael Sheringham

JEAN COCTEAU
Le Passé défini
Edited by Pierre Chanel
Tome 1: 1951-1952. 458pp. 120fr.
Tome 2: 1953. 424pp. 140fr.
Paris: Gallimard.
2 07 070017 8 and 2 078 070018 6

These are the first instalments of a journal Jean Cocteau kept from July 1951 until his death in 1963. He had posthumous publication in mind, anticipating it in the title he chose at the outset. At one point he reprimands Gide for publishing a journal in his own lifetime on the grounds that this curbs spontaneity and makes one wary of what one says about contemporaries. Yet these may be lesser evils than constantly striving to imagine what will go down well with people who read you once you are dead. Cocteau had in fact published more circumstantial journals himself. *Opium* (1930) recorded his attempts to give up the drug. *Malessie* (1949) noted his responses to Egypt, and in 1946 he had published his reflections while making the film *La Belle et la bête*. *Le Passé défini* is certainly more diffuse than these, but its record of the multifarious activities of a compulsively busy man is not necessarily more personal. For all Cocteau's im-

idiosyncrasies, a particular sensibility does not really make itself felt here.

He was leading, by most standards, a charmed life. As a retreat from his apartment near Colette's in the Palais Royal, and his country house at Milly, he has an open invitation to stay with the millionairess Francine Weisweiler at the Villa Santa Sospir on Cap-Ferrat. The days go by very nicely here, particularly since Cocteau's friend, legally adopted son and ultimate heir, the ex-coalminer turned painter, Edouard Dermitt (Doudou), seems to be in permanent residence. The threesome – Francine, Cocteau and Doudou – get on famously and at one point this prompts the diarist to was sentimental: "ma seule gloire dans ce monde sera d'avoir mérité l'amitié de ces deux êtres surnaturels". For outings there is Francine's yacht, rather campily named Orphée II but not always reliable since on one hilarious occasion it fails to pick them up in Barcelona because, it transpires, the crew have opted for a little piracy and cigarette smuggling between France and Spain. Cocteau's output in this bower of bliss is remarkable. More or less simultaneously he is making a film based around the Villa Santa Sospir, writing a play, designing tapestries, painting in oils (which he took up in 1950), planning collaborative projects with Stravinsky and Hindemith, preparing numerous articles and broadcasts, travelling to Germany, Greece and Spain.

Searcher after inner peace

John Sturrock

RAYMOND QUENEAU
Journal 1939-1940
Edited by A.I. Queneau and J.-J. Marchand
259pp. Paris: Gallimard. 85fr.
2 07 07062 1

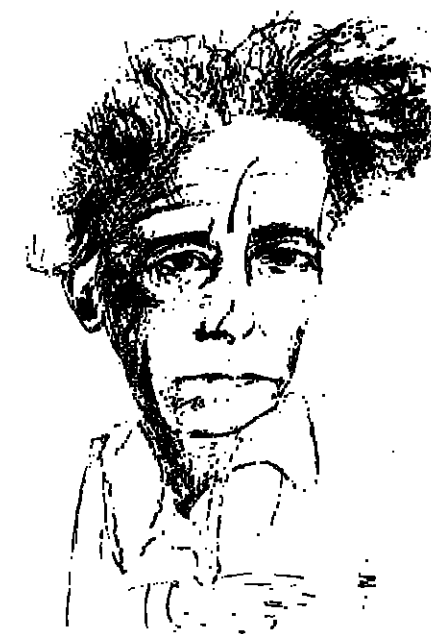
So, after the battering artillery fire of Sartre's *Carnets de guerre*, the reticent musketry of Raymond Queneau's *Journal*, the diary of a very different sort of philosopher conscripted into the same *drôle de guerre*, quieter, more ordinary and believing in brevity. Queneau, unlike Sartre, saw action, about one hour of it, in the west of France in late June 1940, as the infantry regiment he was a private in fell back along with the rest of the collapsing French army. His notes on what it was like are, as ever, of the barest: "Je guette l'arrivée des Allemands s/la route de Nantes. La fusillade se poursuit, intermittente. Je m'aperçois alors que les balles sifflent autour de moi." And that is about all; shooting is one of the things that are done to you in wartime but into which there is no point in looking further. The soldier Queneau is a small man caught up in historic events who refuses himself all historical stature, and he will not in his cherished passivity be moved by what is happening around him, to France or to Europe generally. His thoughts are local ones; he knows of the humiliation that the country is suffering but he takes comfort in his "coeur sec", which means that he can think when others maybe must feel, and can pursue, unperturbed by the débâcle, his mystical search for "une grande paix intérieure", which was his most important business in these stressful months.

His *Journal* begins a little before the war, in July 1939, when Queneau was in Normandy, swimming, reading, writing, with many literary and artistic friends near by. The war that was coming was only one crisis in his life. He was planning to take a regular job for the first time, at the age of thirty-six, as a teacher in a private school to be run by Eugène and Maria Jolas, and was faced as a consequence with learning more geometry and more Greek. He had also, after six years of it, broken off his psychoanalysis (with the sister of the Russian philosopher Lev Shestov), and was not at all happy with what it had done for him: "Et l'analyse? . . . A quel sert? Et maintenant ce découragement, ce désespoir. A quel ça sert? Que j'écrive, que je travaille; malgré tout." But the habits picked up on the couch de haut and the *Journal* briefly recounts a number of his dreams, one or two of them dreamed in English (a language he read well and was trying to improve in, in hopes of becoming an interpreter with the

British), others comical in a Queneau-like vein, as when he dreams of ovens being made into secret weapons, turned up so hot that the enemy is forced to retreat from them. And then, in a local paper in Brittany, in September 1939, Queneau sees the headline: "Le Professeur Frejd est mort". But this apparent endorsement of his own secession from therapy draws no comment from him here; he is a diary-keeper who wants facts to speak for themselves.

Queneau does not much enjoy the army because he does not much enjoy his fellow-soldiers, certainly in the mass. The searcher after inner peace finds them offensively loud, and lacking in spirituality. He tries to tell himself, long-faced Marxist that he is, that it is not right to judge the worth of the proletariat by the representatives of it closest to hand, but he has his bad days when their barbarism gets to him: "Quelle chierie que le voisinage des humains" is one misanthropic entry; "quelle racaille – ça va de l'imbécile et du crétin, à la fripouille et au goujat" is another, atypically more rounded one. And when the rout comes, in May/June 1940, his contempt deepens, more for the officers now, revealed in *extremis* as both feeble and incompetent. Detached though he finds himself to be, waiting, without opinions, for things to happen around or to him, Queneau makes repeated attempts to get himself posted east, to the fighting, but is turned down for being too old. His best times are those when he is able to live outside the camp with his wife and six-year-old son, in a loving domesticity which turns him profoundly against the aridities of the barrack-hut, although in his wry candour he also records the small annoyances of parenthood and, after losing his temper with the boy, decides he has "une incapacité pédagogique", which is not good in someone expecting to become a schoolmaster.

This very attractive *Journal* of a single, dramatically testing year of Queneau's life is no more than an extract from the notebooks which he seems to have kept up throughout his life. This was a kind of writing that he valued, partly for what it saved him from: after reading the journals of Marcel Moré and André Gide he puts the question to himself, "Le Journal évite-t-il l'autobiographie dans le roman?" and firmly concludes, "Alors tant mieux." In a journal Queneau could write of his own dearest concerns without lyricism, from which he shrank, and could be egotistical without vanity, because he did not mean anyone else to read what he was writing. The relatively little that we have here been given of the much more presumably survives of his journals is so appealing and so openly indicative of what sort of person Queneau then was that we can now only ask for more.



The play was staged by Jean-Louis Barrault in 1951 and immediately prompted a fierce controversy whose repercussions enliven these pages. Rather like Sartre's *Le Diable et le bon Dieu*, *Bacchus* is a costume drama set in the late Middle Ages but raising contemporary ethical and metaphysical questions. François Mauriac stalked out of the first night without applauding and then devoted his *Figaro* column to a resounding denunciation of Cocteau, accusing him of having slandered Catholicism and the Church. Cocteau gamely counter-attacked, castigating Mauriac's inquisitorial style and insinuating that his recent Nobel prize had gone to his head. (Cocteau regularly smarts whenever he mentions a prize or honour he feels he has been denied.) *Bacchus* was not a great success, though it did well in Germany, thereby fuelling Cocteau's conviction that only foreigners really appreciated his work, while the crass French public preferred Claudel's meretricious *Christophe Colomb* or such as Giraudoux, Montherlant and Anouilh.

Cocteau comments from time to time on what he is reading but he is seldom truly illuminating. A rereading of Proust prompts some prolonged reflections which are often interesting. "Il faut se résoudre à admettre ses limites."

Individuals before history

Robin Buss

MICHEL MOHRT
La Guerre civile
325pp. Paris: Gallimard. 88fr.
2 07 07051 9

A superficial reading of French history sees it as an alternation between contrary impulses towards liberty and authority, and the resulting civil war provides the title and central theme of Michel Mohrt's novel. If the novel escapes from being merely an illustration of this crude thesis, this is in part because of the form that Mohrt has chosen, and in part the use he makes of his historical references. History, he says, "qui a une explication pour tout, se trompe sur tout"; the civil war may signify no more than a ritual taking of sides over Dreyfus or, indeed, in the war of the sexes; it is not our ideas, but emotions, family influences and childhood experience that dictate our political opinions; and, in the last resort, individuals and their relationships matter, not grand political or historical themes.

The civil war involves the narrator and his central character, Olivier du Trioux, in the years before and during the Second World War, a period in French history of enormous significance for the present. Olivier has flirted with Action Française and opts for Vichy. His literary interests, his dandyism, his shift to a "European" version of fascism and his eventual suicide all suggest Drieu la Rochelle; but the character is no more implausible than the idea that there were many who shared some of Drieu's sympathies and, with the disintegration of his world in 1944-5, his delusions.

The narrator, like all his kind, is just that bit more clear-sighted and more detached than his friend. At the start, carried away by Olivier's

ing, although, with typical self-consciousness, Cocteau congratulates himself for creating an original form of literary criticism because he merges critical comments with personal recollections of Proust and his circle. Letters, telephone calls and visits from Jean Genet are the subject of some of the most interesting entries. When Sartre's massive tome, *Saint Genet comédien et martyr*, appears in 1951, Cocteau reads it avidly but with an understandable mixture of admiration, incredulity and censure. Predictably, there is much debate about what effect it will have on its subject, a topic on which Genet himself proves to have mixed feelings. On the whole Cocteau takes Sartre's own view, expressed here in a letter cited in full, that "Genet s'arrangera toujours pour être libre". One gets the impression that Genet represents a kind of dark mirror in which Cocteau perceived, with fascination and a certain envy, a distorted image of himself: a homosexual artist obsessed with images, with society and with play-acting. At one point Cocteau tellingly notes that Genet's strength lies in not being the victim of his own myth.

It becomes evident before long that the main aim (and secret drama) of these journals is to give the lie to the cruel legend which Cocteau feels has led to his being buried alive or quarantined. He is not (he would like us to observe) the superficial, dandified, jack-of-all-media and unregenerate experimentalist we all take him for, but a serious, committed artist in the mainstream of the French *modernist* tradition. Yet he keeps showing symptoms of the disease he claims he hasn't got, coming out in a rash of often fooling hyperactivity just when he is supposed to be looking serenely patrician. These journals constantly invite us to witness the invisible poet beneath the all too visible jobbing aesthete.

But for all the considerable intelligence and creative flair displayed here, it is often hard to make him out. Cocteau was surely nearer the mark when, in a moment of true self-confrontation rare in these journals, he observes that the real explanation for his constant changes of medium was his inability to reach the higher notes of art: "Il y a un point d'au-dessus que je ne peux pas obtenir, une note haute que je ne peux pas donner. . . Il faut se résoudre à admettre ses limites."

charm and his enthusiasm, he accompanies him on a demonstration against an anticlerical play, to a meeting of the Action Française, and distributing pamphlets. Already their paths diverge: Olivier's passionate involvement with his causes, which makes his appeal credible, contrasts with the detachment which gives the narrator credibility as a recorder of these events. If he had shared to the end his friend's political misjudgments, we might doubt whether he was trustworthy on other matters.

There are other characters: Olivier's father, increasingly out of touch with his time in his Breton retreat, and Hélène, the great love of Olivier's life, whose Popular Front sympathies mean that they can never be united, despite their inescapable attraction for each other. They become the image of the national civil war, with the narrator as mediator, which is his role throughout.

"On allait faire croire aux Français qu'ils avaient été des héros", he writes as the occupation ends. "Comment écrire dans une société où le mensonge était partout? Il faudrait trêner, quarantaine ans, avant que la vérité soit rétablie." The truth he advances is that of the friendship which helps him to understand that Olivier, shipwrecked literally as his beliefs have been shipwrecked metaphorically, was a victim of events. This too is a novelist's judgment, the imaginary indictment deliberately weighted to exculpate Olivier from the worst crimes of fascism ("Il ignorait l'antisémitisme"), but it suggests at the same time that the values implied in the novelist's preoccupation with personal relationships, are to be preferred over the values of history and political commitment. To state that so clearly, in a novel which proposes an exemplary account of the conflicts that have shaped France in the twentieth century, is the novelist's way of mediating in the civil war.

Indian summaries

Dilip Hiro

PRANAY GUPTA
Vengeance: India after the assassination of
Indira Gandhi
368pp. Norton. £14.50.
0 393 02230 7

Pranay Gupta is a former reporter of the *New York Times*, who has spent half his life in America. In *Vengeance: India after the assassination of Indira Gandhi* his themes are that Indira Gandhi was "a grim woman of unbridled ambition" who would stop at nothing to gain and consolidate power, and who conducted politics of divisiveness and confrontation; that she left behind an extraordinary record of mercurial, manipulative and conspiratorial leadership; that the states in India ought to be given more power at the expense of the over-dominant Centre; that Hindu Indians have by and large maltreated the Sikh and Muslim minorities; that socialism breeds corruption and inefficiency; and that Rajiv Gandhi's "seeming preference for free enterprise" should be endorsed heartily. Gupta believes that a new generation of highly motivated, achievement-oriented Indians is making its presence felt in India.

This is a reporter's work with all the attendant strengths and weaknesses. Like any skilled journalist's report, it is highly readable. It is meticulous in such details as giving full names. But polished prose and apt quotations are no substitute for the insights and perceptive interpretations which can transform dedicated reportage into illuminating political analysis or contemporary history. Gupta would rather quote an Indian journalist, with whose views

he wholeheartedly agrees, than risk expressing his own opinion and substantiate it with evidence culled from various sources, primary and secondary.

In his "Author's Note" he says that he interviewed "politicians and peasants and political scientists . . . most of all . . . ordinary Indians". The only ordinary Indians who appear here are the driver of the taxi in Bombay that Gupta hired on the day of Mrs Gandhi's assassination; a young Sikh carpenter from Delhi whose father and brothers were murdered in anti-Sikh riots; and a weaver from a village near Hyderabad. The views and prejudices of industrialists and businessmen fill many pages, but there is not a single line from a trade-union leader or an ordinary industrial worker or a shop assistant. Gupta points out that 70 per cent of the nearly 800 million Indians live in villages (the actual figure is 78 per cent), and that half of the national population subsists below the official poverty line, defined as \$ per capita annual income of \$125. Yet Ganjam Balaram, a village weaver, a representative of this class of Indians, gets barely a page. In contrast, the author lavishes a gushing eulogy and ten times as much space on Aron Puri, editor of the fortnightly *India Today*.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and Rajiv Gandhi's maternal grandfather, once said: "To endeavour to understand and describe the India of today would be the task of a brave man" – to say anything about tomorrow's India would verge on madness. And having quoted him, Gupta writes "I feel both brave and rash". Whatever he might have felt before embarking on the project, he has produced a shapeless work, conceived and written in haste, as if to meet the deadline of a news magazine. It is eminently forgettable.

Re-ordering the remnants

Peter Hainsworth

CAMILLO SBARBARO
L'opera in versi e in prosa
Edited by Gina Lagorio and Vanim Scheimiller
715pp. Milan: Garzanti. L50,000.

Camillo Sbarbaro's name is familiar mainly through Montale, who dedicated two playful but melancholic poems in the *Ossi di seppia* to the "estroso fanciullo", "the fantastical boy", though in fact Sbarbaro was born in 1888, some eight years earlier than Montale himself. Literary histories normally take their cue from there, treating Sbarbaro as someone to be reckoned with, someone who anticipates his more famous friend, and then once Montale comes along largely drops out of sight. Sbarbaro was himself partly responsible for this impression. For many years, beyond a few frequently anthologized poems, his actual writings were difficult to get hold of and even harder to pin down. Mostly published in out-of-the-way editions, they were then continually rewritten and republished, making up a work in progress (that Sbarbaro brought to an end only a few months before his death in 1967). The poems appeared eventually in the form he wanted them to have in 1971. Now they have been reissued, together with four poems that the editors feel were too ruthlessly expunged. But poetry formed only a small part of Sbarbaro's production. And, as well as the poems, all the prose pieces that he wanted to preserve have been published, also in their final form, plus three substantial samples of his extensive work as a translator. All told, *L'opera in versi e in prosa* is a needed compendium. In many ways it is also a troubling one.

The problems show through clearly enough in the poems. Sbarbaro had published his first book, *Resine* (Resins), in 1911, but it was his second, *Pianissimo*, coming out three years later, which made his name. In it he presented himself in predominantly negative terms — a man outside society, emotionally spent, with-

out will or purpose, but deriving a strange pleasure from his own aridity and occasionally enriched by moments of illumination. It was his anti-poetic stance that offered possibilities for a particular sort of poetry, even, within Italian terms, a new one. A sympathetic reader of the time, who was tired of the fulsome of turn-of-the-century poetry in Italy, might find in Sbarbaro the lyricism of sheer prose, as, for instance, in this opening:

Talor, mentre cammino per le strade
della città tumultuosa solo,
mi dimentico il mio destino d'essere
come tra gli altri, e, come smemorato,
anzi tratto fuor di me stesso, guardo
la gente con aperti occhi estranei.

("Sometimes, while I walk through the streets / of the tumultuous city alone, / I forget my destiny of being / a man among others, and, as if losing my memory, / or rather draw outside myself, I watch / people with wide-open alien eyes.")

More than half a century later the limits are evident. The lines are on the edge of finding the imagery that they need and which would indeed be the strength of Montale, but they are pulled back towards the mannered vagueness of late Romanticism. The few new poems that Sbarbaro was to write and that were eventually published as *Rimanenze* (Remnants), did take a step or two forward, but for the most part he could not carry through his drive towards prose in poetry. Nor could he go back. As a writer of verse he limited himself to rewriting *Pianissimo*, eventually reaching the point where he put the 1914 and the 1960 versions into his collected poems as if they were separate books. He also suppressed *Resine*. The result is a sad perversion. The changes between the two forms of *Pianissimo* are arbitrary or pedantic, and the absence of the first collection means that there is no chance of assessing Sbarbaro's early development. A historical dimension has been displaced in favour of a timelessness that the poems do not warrant.

The prose is affected by internal tensions and external manipulations of a similar kind.

Sbarbaro had taken to writing short pieces of prose during the First World War, in which he served as an officer on the Austrian front. The first collection of *Truciolli* (Wood-shavings) appeared in 1920, and other collections with the same title or comparably self-effacing ones would follow over the years until the final version of *Truciolli*, as printed here, absorbed them all. Overall these prose pieces are more like prose-poems than narratives or reflections and are marked, not by a decrease but by an increase in aestheticizing artifice. One after another the moments of tenuous insight come: urban sunsets and springs, street-scenes, lonely figures in a brothel, more or less depraved eccentrics, meetings with criminals in low Genoese bars are all registered with a studied elaboration in inverse proportion to the normal (bourgeois) perception of their value. In all this the shade of Huysmans (whom Sbarbaro translated) looms large, though there are unexpected intimations of Genet and Beckett. But there is a special kind of fragmentariness, even of insignificance, at work: each piece seems to delight in exhausting itself in its own allusive incompleteness. The point to which Sbarbaro is drawn is thus at the opposite pole to anti-literature, an extreme being reached in a section entitled *Delli ammaestramenti a Polidoro* (The sole book of instructions to Polidoro) in which, continuing from the title, a specially recherché form of antiquated Italian is simultaneously gayer and indulged.

Occasionally the poseur steps aside. Sbarbaro was an authority on lichens, and in a few pieces he writes of his mania for collecting these, as he sees them, neglected forms of life, apparently innumerable, lost somewhere between the vegetal and the mineral, afraid of nothing except man and needing to be helped into existence by being named. The anthropomorphizing may be scientifically suspect, but it allows subtler and more convincing imaginative play than Sbarbaro seems to find in the streets of Genoa and on the Ligurian coast.

The last *Truciolli* were written not long before the war. By then Sbarbaro had largely cut

himself off from the rest of the Italian literary world, preferring, it seems, a decent isolation in Genoa to the frightening razzism of Fascist culture in the main centres. But, if anything, he became even more withdrawn after the war. Once he had retired from his job as a teacher of Greek, he went to live with his sister in the little town of Spertorno. There, apart from rewriting and translating, he produced two further books. *Fuochi fatui* (Will-o'-the-wisps) is the closest that Sbarbaro came to the prosaic: the diary-like pieces of which it is largely made up are centred on his experiences in Liguria during the Second World War. Unfortunately the autobiographical possibilities are distorted by a blurring of the dating and sequence of things and the intercalation of strings of somewhat baleful apophthegms. Lastly, with *Caroline in franchigia* (Postcard from leave), Sbarbaro turned back to letters and notes from the First World War and just after. Once again he fragmented and re-ordered in the name of art. As had been the rule throughout his career, documentary value is compromised, and with it the chances of a different literature, perhaps more humble but more in accordance with the most interesting, lichen-like sides of his imagination.

In a short memoir that he wrote on Sbarbaro's death, Montale surmised that, in his life at least, he was a successful and happy man. As in the two poems of fifty years previously, his perception of his friend barely corresponds at all with the impression of unfulfilled promise that emerges from his writings. That the translations selected for inclusion should be the *Cyclops* of Euripides, *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras* and two longish Latin poems by Giovanni Pascoli, says more about the negatives than the positives of Sbarbaro's Alexandrian sophistication (and also about that of his editors). *L'opera in versi e in prosa* erects a literary monument which is seriously off-balance. The contingencies of personal history and provincial culture which Sbarbaro censured out will have to be restored if we are to assess his work.

"Livia" in the poem is none other than Ida Pascoli in disguise. Pieretti also gives us some revealing anecdotes which support very convincingly Garboli's Freudian interpretation of the Pascoli triangle, and promises to publish "irrefutable documents" concerning the poet's passion for Ida. Garboli's and Pieretti's method, however, which insists that understanding of the poems must be based on study of the poet's biography, is not liked by Furio Felcini, who maintains that Pascoli was the most literary of authors, and that whenever he sat down at one of his desks (he had three: one for Italian literature, one for Latin and the third for Dante) he pushed away all the sublimating elements of his life, "to steep every word in literature".

The *Atti* volume is attractive for containing these conflicting views. Its twenty-one chapters deal with many different subjects, from "Pascoli and Pirandello" to "Pascoli and Pietrantonio", from detailed studies of *Canli di Castelvecchio* and of the Latin *Carmina*, to essays on "Il fanciullino e la poetica pascoliana" and on single poems such as "Og e Magog" and "Novembre". It ends with Edmondo Sanguineti's very stimulating parallel between Pascoli and Puccini made at a previous Pascoli conference, in 1967, which remains one of the permanent acquisitions of modern Pascolian scholarship.

Recent reissues in the I Meridiani series published by Mondadori include a two-volume edition of Pirandello's *Novelle per un anno* with an introduction by Giovanni Macchia and chronology and notes by Mario Costanzo (1,583pp. L60,000), Ezra Pound's *Cantos* translated and introduced by Mary de Rachlewitz with a commentary and bibliography by witz with a commentary and bibliography by de Rachlewitz and Maria Luisa Ardizzone (1,651pp. L30,000), and Natalia Ginzburg's *Opere*, with a preface by Cesare Garboli (1,355pp. L30,000), containing *La strada che va in città*, *E stato così*, *Racconti brevi*, *Valentinio*, *Tutti i nostri ieri*, *Saggiatura*, *Le voci della sera*, *Le piccole virtù*, and the *conquiste*.

Conservative estimates

Richard Poirier

MARTIN AMIS
The Moronic Inferno: And other visits to America
208pp. Cape. £9.95.
0224023853

I write this in the veritable crunch of Martin Amis's "moronic inferno": the weekend of 4 July in New York City. The date marks the independence of the Colonies from British rule and this year includes an extravaganza honouring the restoration of the Statue of Liberty on its hundredth birthday. There are Liberty T-shirts, Liberty charcoal briquettes, Liberty dry-roasted peanuts, along with the greatest fireworks display in the nation's history and the greatest massing of ships, including tall sailing ships from around the world, since the Second World War. Besides President Reagan ("Here's Ronnie: On the Road with Reagan" is the title of one of Amis's pieces), there is President Mitterrand of France and an unidentified elderly woman who, when asked by a television interviewer why she too loved the Statue, responded that she loved it because it looked so much like Elvis Presley.

All the better that the woman didn't intend to be subversive or satirical. Her remark is typical of the liberating inflections that can be heard all the time from unassuming people. They suggest that America and Americans are not yet as bad, or as flat-minded, as they have positioned themselves to be. Amis is oblivious to little touches of this sort, to a degree that makes unfortunately true of him a characterization he offers of Joan Didion: at no point does he "think about the sort of people who [he] would never normally have cause to come across" in his journalistic duties. The pieces collected here, with some added links and postscripts, were written over the past several years for various newspapers and journals, particularly the *Observer*.

They include mere snippets, like a note on the resurrection of *Vanity Fair*, or on William Burroughs ("most of Burroughs is trash"), or on Kurt Vonnegut. There are more extensive review-interviews of writers, such as Gore Vidal ("I cannot get through Vidal's fiction") and of film directors, such as Brian De Palma (his films "make no sense") or Steven Spielberg. There are news-story commentaries, on "The Case of Claus von Bulow" and on "The Killings in Atlanta", where Amis discovers that the Peachtree Plaza Hotel is "a billion dollar masterpiece of American efficiency, luxury, and robotic good manners". And there are predictably disapproving reports on Jerry Falwell's evangelical Right and on Hugh Hefner and his Key Clubs, which have since been banished from the Playboy empire. The best items are the sensitive and well-researched "Double Jeopardy: Making sense of Aids" and "Gloria Steinem and the Feminist Utopia". The book begins and ends with obsequies to Saul Bellow. "Saul Bellow", we are assured, "really is a great American writer."

The "really" is quite unnecessary since, so far as Amis's reading has taken him, all other American writers are more or less bush-leagued. The book's title is from a phrase in Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* (Bellow himself found it in Wyndham Lewis) and Amis's use of it, which is much broader than Bellow's, is a clue to his rather awkward, retrospective ambitions for this collection. The title encourages one to suppose that a reportorial assignment has somehow been transformed into a cultural one, without any intervening effort at rewriting or rethinking. And yet he admits that nearly all of the pieces "were written left handed", not by choice, that is, but at the request of various editors. No wonder he himself betrays some uncertainty about the results. First we're told that he had been asked on a couple of occasions "to write a book about America"; then, that in going over his selected journalism he discovered that "I had already written a book about America"; then that he is giving us merely "a collection of peripatetic journalism", and finally, having imposed on it so portentous a title, that the title does not in fact refer to America. "The moronic inferno is not", he says, "a peculiarly American condition. It is global and perhaps eternal. It is also, of course, primarily a metaphor: a metaphor for human infamy;

mass, gross, ever-distracting human infamy."

Amis is a very OK writer, but he shouldn't expect his prose to carry that kind of baggage. He tends to chug and wheeze with incremental repetitions whenever it occurs to him that he ought to be solemn. He has been made anxious over the years, I suspect, by such experiences as the one he reports in "Diana Trilling at Claremont Avenue". In response to an "incautious remark, illiberal in tendency" made by him at their first meeting in London's Connaught Hotel, Mrs Trilling, in the company of her husband Lionel, "cracked her teacup into its saucer and said 'Do you really mean that? Then what are we doing here? Why are we sitting here having tea with this person?'"

Amis, who prefers not to be respectful to very much, is none the less enthralled at any hint that there are Standards and that the Standards are at work. So that when he again sees Mrs Trilling for tea, this time in her Manhattan apartment, he describes the end of their meeting on a half-plaintive and wholly exalted note: "But there aren't many people like you," I said cautiously. "You're a clear thinker." That's right. Too clear perhaps, said Mrs Trilling. "He has learnt when to pass the cookies but has forgotten, as Mrs Trilling seldom does, when to be amused."

The trouble is, Amis doesn't seem to have much fun on his visits. One inferable reason is that he has yet to master a requirement of good cultural reporting: that you must learn how to enjoy a lot of things you disapprove of, and that you have to find out why some other people seem to enjoy them instinctively. There are, inevitably, figures whose delight in themselves is contagious, like Steinem, Capote and Vidal, though even in these cases Amis has to be pulled into the party, and he manages so successfully to resist the charm, energy and audacity of Norman Mailer that he is left only with personal abuse:

In the United States, provided you are Norman Mailer, it seems you can act like a maniac for forty years — and survive, prosper and multiply, and write the books. The work is what it is: sublime, ridiculous, always interesting. But the deeds — the human works — are a monotonous disgrace.

Why so heavy a hand? The fact that the "human works" conspicuously include nearly a dozen bright, healthy and happy offspring, all of them devoted to a father who remains friendly to their various mothers, is the kind of factor Amis is so determined to miss that he

shouldn't have brought the matter up in the first place.

Bellow might have told him that it is always dangerous to try to be interesting when you are insufficiently engaged in a personal way with your subjects. In one of his better moments (*Salmagundi*, No 30, Summer 1975), Bellow allows that,

if I were terribly moralistic I would scold everyone about this: that people do feel that there's something wrong, unappealing, unappealing in the ordinary — that they have to do something supererogatory, make themselves appeal; that the world is very boring, that they, themselves, are very boring and that they must discover some way not to be.

While Amis the journalist cannot afford to be boring or bored, he never wants to let himself go, to risk the self-exposures of an unguarded liking for something other than the monumental. Deeply hostile to artists who willingly put themselves forward in their work, like Philip Roth, Woody Allen and Mailer, he is a sort of neo-classicist manqué, distressed by a force of monstrosity, appetite and vulgarity which he calls "America". In Florida he boasts, "drop me down anywhere in America and I'll tell you where I am: in America", while in the New York of Gloria Steinem he complains that "as soon as you leave New York you see how monstrously various, how humanly balkanized America really is". Nice thing about America, you can say anything you want about it, even if it's contradictory. "American novels are big all right", he tells us in the opening piece on Bellow, "but partly because America is big too", a bromide discarded long since by anyone who has bothered to ask himself why, in that case, *Middlenarch* and *Ulysses* are not small. On his visit to Palm Beach ("Never in my life have I seen such clogged, stifling luxury") he drives inland and discovers himself "immediately confronted by the booming chaos of middle America", a transition achieved less, I suspect, by driving than by typing. If wearing name tags has to be mentioned in the Ronald Reagan piece, what can be said about them? Obviously, that this is "something that Americans especially like doing", and if nothing else can be made out of the conviviality of the news-cameramen on the campaign plane, then why not propose that "their laughter, like so much American laughter, did not express high spirits but a willed raucousness". Enough, I say, of this willed raucousness! If, as he proposes in "Mr Vidal:

Wheels

Even the piss-artist, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet like a musical policeman, is making an irreversible commitment. . . . He shivers.

(The faith, application and know-how it takes to do anything, even under controlled circumstances!) I find in myself this absurd purposefulness;

walking through my house, I lean forward, I lick my finger to open a door, to turn over a page, or the page of a calendar, or an advent calendar.

It takes all day to read twenty pages, and the day goes down in a blaze of television. One blue day is much like another The plane lands

with a mew of rubber and a few "less-than" signs. The ball, remembering who hit it, keeps going. The choreographed car-chase is ruinously exciting,

but the wheels turn very slowly backwards, to convince the viewer that, far from wasting time, he's recreating himself. A Christmas Special

From the great outdoors, there's the derision of real ears, the honeyed drone of approachable taxis, some man's immortal Jag, numbered RAMISH . . .

How it must cut past the huddle of water-blue Inyacs, lining the elbow of the road: smashed imperatives, wheelchair hulls, rhombuses, stalled quartz.

MICHAEL HOFMANN

Unpatriotic Gore", "humorless people . . . include a great many Americans" who none the less obligingly laugh a good deal, then Amis's style seems to me better suited to them than to his compatriots, with their more cagey risibility. Anyway, Americans "tend to reduce argument to a babble of interested personalities". And so it goes. Hugh Hefner's alleged confusions of money and sex, consumerism and need, is "a very American mix", while euphemisms represent "a very American dishonesty". And when evocations of America are not put to work in place of a more personally engaged attentiveness, the function is just as glibly assigned to the easily maligned Sixties: "the usual rag-bag of Sixties sophistries" or "the Sixties, that golden age of high energy and low art", though, as it happens, it was a triumphant decade in American painting (which is mentioned not at all), in fiction (notably with Pynchon, who is referred to once) and in poetry, with Lowell, Bishop and Ashbery, to name only a few who are not mentioned anywhere in the book.

I'm not suggesting that a survey is the answer; rather that Amis's rhetoric and buzzwords exist in default of a willingness to find what he might have looked for. There is instead a kind of tightness and huffiness, issuing in such phrases as "our present permissiveness about turning tragedy into entertainment" — even though that seems to some of us what much literature tries to do — in the course of making a quite misleading point about so-called "non-fiction fiction". The trouble, so he opines, is that "what is missing . . . is moral imagination, moral artistry. The facts cannot be arranged to give them moral point."

When Amis drums on a word like that you know he's winding up for a not very effective delivery. "The facts" can only come into existence when someone recognizes them as such, which is a human arrangement to begin with. And even assuming, which no historian or reporter in his or her right mind ever would, that in non-fiction "the facts" cannot be arranged to make a moral point, it is always the case that these "facts" are none the less arranged and re-arranged by the style in which they are rendered, as a moralist like Gibbon would have shown Amis long before Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*.

Except at points in the Steinem, the AIDS, and the Vidal pieces, it is mostly impossible to find in Amis's style those local, intimate, inquisitive reactions that might complicate the settled opinions of the communities for which he writes. He would like to suppose himself exempt from the criticisms he makes of Joan Didion, and for the reason that he assumes that what he calls "literature" is on his side, though I'm afraid he has a way to go. "Probably all writers", he remarks,

are at some point briefly under the impression that they are in the forefront of disintegration and chaos, that they are among the first to live and work after things fell apart. The continuity such an impression ignores is a literary continuity. It routinely assimilates and domesticates more pressing burdens than Miss Didion's particular share of vivid, ephemeral horrors.

This is the familiar voice of a contemporary cultural conservatism trying to enlist a literature whose inner turmoils it fails and does not want to comprehend. There is, besides, a conspicuous inability in the book to elicit such literary continuities as might have allowed Amis some better sense of the American scene and the American writers he visits. It isn't necessarily that he needs to read more, though that wouldn't hurt in the case of authors he discusses, but that he needs to discover how to read the complicated infections I mentioned at the beginning. This is true especially of Bellow's novels. Their distinction resides not in what Amis calls their "High Style . . . and exalted voice appropriate to the twentieth century", a formula not only at odds with the actual experience of reading Bellow but so gaseous as to be applicable to any ambitious writer of any time. Bellow is most alive precisely in his capacity to extemporize a style in which ordinary slang, coterie usages, the vulgarities, provincialities and waywardness of speech continually work against the pontifications of characters like Mr Sammler and Herzog, and in a manner contrived to redeem them. This is the sort of responsiveness, nuance, and play that Amis hasn't made his own, not yet anyway.

Behind the lines

Lorna Sage

Getting into its stride as the Cultural Capital of Europe for 1986, the city of Florence has overcome formidable difficulties with security, climate and cash to import from its twin city Detroit, a major international exhibition, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello*, which the Detroit Institute of Arts mounted last autumn in anticipation of Donatello's sixth centenary. This, though, is a variant on the American exhibition. Florence has reclaimed her son, as the title *Donatello ed i suoi* familiarly and untranslatably (Donatello and his kin?) proclaims. Around a third of the works that provided a Renaissance context in Detroit were not judged necessary here; and forty-odd pieces from Italy have been added—making in all ninety-three works, some forty-two of them by Donatello. The cautious, scholarly approach of the Detroit exhibition has been maintained, however; Donatello's last centenary produced a wild profusion of new attributions, nearly all severely stripped away in the earlier part of this century, and now they creep back very slowly indeed. But there are some—and the exhibition will doubtless act as a way of testing the waters, and airing the arguments about (for example) the wooden St Jerome from Faenza, here face to face with the Mary Magdalene, and the bronze Baptist from Siena; and about the unfinished relief known as the Madonna delle Murate, which has been waiting in the wings for twenty years.

The emphasis, however, is on the intimacy of Donatello's relations with his contemporaries, and the impersonality of the technical virtuosity. This is a striking two-dimensional Donatello—not least because of the many smaller works in relief that have returned to Florence after several centuries—in particular, the marble "Herod's Banquet" panel (from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille) with the "relievo schiacciato" style he invented, with its extraordinary illusion of architectural depth; and the bronze tondo from the Victoria and Albert Museum ("Madonna and Child with Four Angels") which only came to light in 1975, after having descended to the indignity of a tiddly-wink dish in the Fitzwilliam family. This for once is not a disputed attribution: Donatello made a present of it in 1456 to his doctor Chellini, who described it in great detail—"the Virgin Mary with the child in her arms and two angels each side, all in bronze, and hollowed out on the back to enable you to make plates of glass..." (*Donatello ed i suoi* is at the Forte de Belvedere until September 7, excepting Mondays.)

* * *

If the Donatello exhibition is international and painstaking, then *La Maddalena fra sacro e profano* at Palazzo Pitti is, as Florence's exhibition organizer Sergio Salvi puts it, an exuberant tribute to the *genius loci*, shamelessly home-grown. The people at the Pitti lost a tug of war over Donatello's Magdalene, but they have others whose raw bones and golden hair are almost as evocative. Mary Magdalene provides an ideal occasion for contemplating (and engaging in) the play of representation, since she started off as a (late) composite of various Gospel Marys, and so was always unstable. The exhibition follows her from the desert to heaven (with delirious vanity and ecstasy), at once hidden and revealed by the flowing hair with which one of her avatars dried Christ's feet (but which derives also from St Agnes, whose hair grew so miraculously to cover her nakedness when she was stripped on a Roman holiday). Over the centuries the desiccated peasant puts on flesh, until she becomes the full-blown paradox, privileged by sin, of the Counter-Reformation—as in Titian's painting, which roused Ruskin to a fury of revulsion: "the disgusting Magdalene in the Pitti Palace". (*La Maddalena fra sacro e profano* at the Pitti Palace is open from 9am to 7pm until September 7 excepting Mondays.)

Other Cultural Capital events promised include exhibitions centring on Degas and Picasso. But not, alas, *Angioflorinence* at the Fortezza da Basso, which has been closed down indefinitely by the fire brigade. British Arts Minister Richard Luce, himself a temporary Angloflorinence for the celebrations, must be

contemplating with some apprehension our turn, in 1990. So far the only British cities to offer themselves (given that London has lost its voice) have been Glasgow and Leeds, and rumour has it that the Ministry is toying with the idea of a movable feast which will give several cities the chance to be, as it were, Capital for a day.

* * *

The very word National has an unfashionable ring these days (witness the birth of British Coal). The feeling seems to be that if you can't exactly "privatize", then you can at least banish the bad magic associated with public ownership and state subsidies by changing the name. Such practices signify a touching faith in the power of mere words. It's ironically apt, then, that among the next national organizations to be re-christened should be the National Book League, which is planning to change its name to the "Book Trust". The annual general meeting on September 25 will be asked to approve a set of recommendations from a working party chaired by Tim Rix of the Longman Group (NBL deputy chairman), which will effect the transformation. At the same time members, if they can afford it, will become "Friends"—to include the new category of "Corporate Friends"—who will make up the "shareholders" who will elect the new "board of directors". The quotation marks belong to the working party, and serve perhaps as a residual indication that it will take a little while before the new vocabulary comes quite naturally. Be that as it may, the old clubbable order, which received its death blow when the League lost its West End premises and moved to Wandsworth, is certainly no more. The working party report scornfully denounces any last

"hankerings" ("the distance from central London is more psychological than real") and proposes to supply the new "project managers" with nippy little cars to prove the point.

All this verbal activity seems to have been sparked off by the need to stay in line with the Arts Council's changing aims, and in particular its style. The proposed new Book Trust slogan—"The independent voice for readers"—has a neatly contradictory subtext. Not independent of the Arts Council, clearly—though after 1987-8 the Council will be applied to for specific projects rather than for blanket funding. Nor on the other hand, despite caveats ("it is essential that the Trust should not be in any way the 'child' of the Book Industry"), independent of the publishers, since Corporate Friends will inevitably be drawn from the trade. Indeed, as a voice "for" readers, the streamlined Trust will be more distant than before, since it is withdrawing from quixotic, "over-ambitious" schemes to take books directly to the people (branches, book buses, travelling exhibitions, story-telling groups and teenage reading clubs) to concentrate on a "catalytic" fund-raising and promotional role, ie, those activities (like administering prizes) which have "High Visibility", so that the shareholders can see that their money is being well spent. However, it is not clear, as yet at least, how the new organization is (to follow through its metaphor) to go into profit. That would mean finding some solution to what they describe in unreconstructed language as "the crisis facing our society"—the present quantity and quality of reading by children and adults, the decline in public investment in the supply of books and the support of literature, and the threats from "other media". The born-again Trust looks more like a strategy for adjusting to this situation than a way of stemming the tide.

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The rogues and rascals assembled reverently on July 3 at St James's, Piccadilly, for a memorial service for Elizabeth Smart—an occasion refreshingly free from Poets-Corner pieties and whispers, which reminded one that Ann Barr pointed out in her *Observer* obituary, Smart was always a great party-giver. There was no exception: the company included Lady Mary John, Laurie Lee, Craigie Aitchison, Mary Canary, Eddie Lindon, Lady Emma Peter Owen, George Macbeth, Jill Neill, Thea Porter . . . Beryl Bainbridge confessed to having met Elizabeth Smart only a few days before her death and expressed unforgotten regret at not having been numbered among her friends. And those friends who scripted memories confirmed Smart's gift for loyalty—Jeffrey Bernard, for instance, recalled that as a gardening correspondent she would weeds with love, "but was very good at judging the difference between human weeds and flowers". George Barker, the inspiration of his lifelong love affair with the Muse, which started with *By Grand Central Station I'm Down* and *Wept*, read quia Amore Langue ("her bed is made, her bolster is bliss . . . immortality—in the form of children and grandchildren, as well as plants and poems") and those of the Metaphysicals she played as of right)—seemed for once unproblematic, and the Revd Norry McCurry officiating, offered with almost an apology "some liturgical words which will hardly be up to the standard". The sweltering wake at Casa House lowered the tone a little—just enough to recall the Soho mysteries she loved to celebrate: "What is perfection strikes loud as shocking in the Tottenham Court Road".

The periodicals: The Indian Literary Review

Ashok Bery

DEVINDRA KOHLI and SURESH KOHLI (Editors)
The Indian Literary Review
99pp. Devindra Kohli, Printzman, 18A/11
Dorwalan, New Rohtak Road, New Delhi-110005.

The theme of divided cultural identity, understandably a common one for Indo-Anglian writers, crops up regularly in the pages of the *Indian Literary Review*. In an early issue, Anita Desai pointed out that Indian traditions in narrative, drama and poetry were aural and that "all modern trends in such forms have had to be imported from abroad"; the success of an Indian writer lies, she suggests, in the ability to make Eastern and Western traditions converge. The Indian Jewish poet, Nissim Ezekiel, describing a more unusual form of the conflict, explained in an interview with the magazine that he had tried for years to be Indian (which, for him, meant responding to the Hindu tradition) but had had to abandon the attempt: "a Jew can never be a 'real' Indian . . . we've lived in India only 2,000 years". Many of the critical articles appearing in the review have been on themes such as "the East-West encounter", "the Anglo-Indian encounter", or the writer's alienation from the Indian landscape. This concern, though, is not so much part of a programme of resistance than a sign of the need of all English-speaking Indians to make a pact with their dual heritage.

Not all the magazine's writers are troubled by such divisions, however. As well as publishing new writing in English, it welcomes work about India by non-Indians and translations from the various regional languages; this policy helps it to open up perspectives other than those of the English-speaking minority which dominates much of the economic and political life of the country. The resulting diversity is visible in the varied and distinguished list of past contributors which includes, apart from Desai and Ezekiel, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Vijay Tendulkar, Shiv K. Kumar, Mukul Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan.

The current issue is representative in its range. A potentially interesting interview with the Oriya novelist Gopinath Mohanty, who

spent a number of years among, and has written about, backward Orissan hill tribes, loses its way in bland questions and over-elaborate answers. This is followed by two extracts from Raja Rao's new novel, *The Chessmaster and his Moves*. One of these describes an encounter in France between an Indian mathematician and an Algerian nationalist; the other is an uneasy mélange of religion and lyricism about Bengal, difficult to assess in isolation. The poems are not particularly impressive, often petering out in cul-de-sacs of imagery and sentimentality ("The orange-roofed / Mountain but / Claps its hands / At the sun. / Glory be to God / For maize").

The translations and longer critical articles are more purposeful. Bruce King, although occasionally hovering close to classroom exegesis ("The lengthening and shortening of the lines contribute to suggesting the hawk's motion in flight"), explores the "violence and science, toughness and compassion, cynicism and concern" in Keki N. Daruwalla's poems and makes a case for the poet's ability to lose his tensions in unresolved complexity. Jan Stachniewski writes acutely about Jayan Mahapatra's lack of syntactical control and facility with metaphor, but wheels on some unnecessary Jakobsonian artillery in the process. The most interesting piece is a selection of Sehdev Kumar's translations of the fifteenth century mystical poet, Kabir, accompanied by an illuminating analysis of his imagery.

Disparateness is typical of the *Indian Literary Review*, and one occasionally feels that it needs a sharper focus. But the tasks it has set itself are worthy. A firmer hand with the poems and short stories (and with the inevitable proof-reading) would do a lot to improve it.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ON

The TLS of July 20, 1911, published a review by G. S. Gordon of the first edition of The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (adapted by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler from the Oxford English Dictionary), from which the following extracts are taken:

"The popular idea of a popular dictionary, drawn from the popular dictionaries themselves, is of a book to be consulted in seconds, like a time-table or an atlas. You look up the meaning of *nephritis* or the spelling of *siege* or the etymology of *blunderbus*, as you would look up the S.2 or the position of Marquibo. The popular dictionary, that is to say, is not really a dictionary at all, but a blend of glossary and encyclopaedia. It treats words less as the elements of speech than as the names of things, and to explain the names by describing the things is the soul of its method. When its editor has spelt a word and defined it, has shown how it may be pronounced, and (with more hesitation) how it may be derived, he is ready for the next vocable, and so passes with a light hand from *loyalty* to *lozenge*, from *schooner* to *scolioche*, until 'at length zymotic ends the wordy tale'. It may seem at first thought surprising that nothing in the style of the 'Concise Oxford Dictionary' has been done before; that we can point to no popular dictionary which has faced the problem of

currency as this Dictionary has done, and grappled with the swarming life of modern speech, vulgar as well as dignified, colloquial as well as written. The [explanation] is the Englishman, with that habitual aversion to a system which has prevented their ever enjoying a written code or Constitution, have left the making of their dictionaries for the most part to Scotland and America. You have only to recall their names—Webster's, Ogilvie, Annandale's, Chambers's, Murray's. But the lexicographers of Scotland and America, however admirable at English words, cannot pretend to the same certainty and dexterity in English idiom. The solution of the problem was clearly a collaboration: Scots to do the still life and Englishmen to do the currency. There was no difficulty about the Scots. They were there, and had always been there—fine, simple, even heroic figures, and always very willing. The difficulty was to catch the Englishman. The solution came of itself. The 'Oxford Dictionary' was nearing an end, and the Fowlers published their 'King's English'. Here at last were two Englishmen actually keen about the English language, actually engaged in the study of its idiom, its speech and writings of their contemporaries, and what was still more wonderful, willing to share their results with the world.

Letters

'The Serpent and the Rainbow'

Sir,—Judith Gleason's review of Wade Davis's *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (July 4) offers a valuable summary of the book's contents, but unfortunately adds one factual inaccuracy to the "egregious errors" which it detects. Unlike the author himself, Judith Gleason erroneously refers to pre-independence Haiti as Saint Dominique; the French colony was in fact called Saint Domingue, a French adaptation of the prior Spanish name, Santo Domingo, which is still applied to the capital city of the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

Less trivial but more contentious is the review's reiterated assertion that Haiti represents "a common culture" and a "profound natural communality within a sustaining environment". One wonders how many French-speaking upper-middle-class *mulâtres* from Pétionville or Turgeau would recognize or welcome the idea of any such homogeneity in relation to the Créole-speaking black inhabitants of the urban slums and countryside. A major problem in Haiti has always been and remains one of colour and class, which largely determines the traditionally antagonistic nature of Haitian politics and the much documented economic disparity between coloured elite and black majority. If Haiti has managed to "survive"—and frequently sovereignty has been jeopardized by internal colour conflict—then it is perhaps less due to the communality of its secret societies than to competition and incompetence among its would-be colonizers.

As in many Caribbean and Latin American countries, Haiti's cultural fragmentation and social heterogeneity constitute a seemingly permanent legacy of European colonial practice.

J. A. FERGUSON,
St Edmund Hall, Oxford.

The Melbourne Manuscript

Sir,—In seeking to identify the author of the Melbourne Manuscript I naturally considered the claims of James Shirley, as put forward by I. A. Shapiro in his letter of July 4. But as there is virtually no similarity between the handwriting of the manuscript and that of James Shirley as reproduced by Greg (XCVA-d), and as the manuscript is clearly autograph, there is no possibility of its being by him. Since Act I, ii of Shirley's play *The Tractor* is clearly a reworking of the scene preserved in this manuscript, there is of course a possibility that the manuscript at one time passed through Shirley's hands at Gray's Inn, as Professor Shapiro suggests.

Far from all the data pointing to Shirley as the author of the manuscript, there is other evidence, as set out in my catalogue, that he "only usher'd it [the play] in to the Stage". It may also, incidentally, be questioned whether *The Tractor* represents what Professor Shapiro calls "maturer judgment" on Shirley's part. Most people would, I believe, agree that his sheets were not sent out of the print shop for correction by authors before the eighteenth century. If we substitute "professional playwrights" for "authors" there may be a measure of truth in that. But it would be interesting to know how Williams, as an editor of Beaumont and Fletcher, explains two curious phenomena: the single-sided proof sheet from Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* preserved in a binding in Brasenose College, and the fact that in *The Nice Valour* (c. 1625), Fletcher and Middleton show an author receiving proofs sent out by his printer.

FELIX PRYOR,
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Renaissance Printers

Sir,—In her review of some recent Shakespearean studies (April 25), Inga-Stina Ewbank commended two books for providing "a solidly factual context for Shakespeare's works". One of them—*The Craft of Printing and the Publication of Shakespeare's Works* by George Walton Williams—she praised as follows: "Careful scholarship and a striking ability to select supportive illustrations make this book a must for anyone studying the production of 'Renaissance books'." Professor Ewbank's reputation as a Shakespearean scholar would make me hesitate to question any "must" she recommended in her field. But as one whose profession is precisely defined by "studying the production of Renaissance books", I feel that her assessment of Williams's book can be not only questioned, but flatly contradicted.

Williams's monograph is apparently intended as a popular introduction to the subject, and there is little obtrusive scholarly apparatus (only two of the eleven footnotes, for example, are citations). For similar reasons, Williams makes virtually no attempt in the text to distinguish between fact and speculation: the account of Gutenberg's experiments, for instance, is related to matter-of-factly that no novice would realize how little of it is supported by real evidence. Much of the conjectural material admittedly derives from theories that are both long-accepted and plausible—but some of the guesses are new and wild. For example, after noting that the modern *u/v* and *i/j* conventions were first used in print by Trissino in 1524, Williams goes on to claim that Trissino also used the Greek omega in his poems, "and it is from this that modern double-u . . . derives" (p. 40). This is sheer nonsense. Trissino used omega to distinguish one of the two Italian pronunciations of *o*, and this had nothing whatever to do with the origin of "modern double-u"—a letter derived from Latin "VV", and in widespread use for centuries before printing was invented. Williams's own Plate 24 shows more than a dozen examples of a "w" used by Caxton in 1490, and the antiquity of the letter can be conveniently confirmed in almost any encyclopaedia that illustrates either the Domesday Book or the Bayeux Tapestry.

Since Williams has a separate chapter entitled "Printing in England" the lengthy chapter on "The Craft of Printing" is presumably intended to describe practices that were common throughout Europe. One major section of the chapter, however, concentrates almost exclusively on the supposed methods of the "Elizabethan" printers responsible for the (late Jacobean) First Folio—and that section is written as if several highly questionable hypotheses advanced some forty years ago had passed unchallenged into the realm of accepted fact. The most striking example is the discussion of proof-reading (pp. 59–60), in which a modified version of a moribund myth is wheeled out.

The theory that the press-variants revealed by collation represent the only correction that pre-Restoration plays received—in other words, that the text was not usually proofed in any way before the printing began—has rarely been taken seriously by anyone with typesetting experience (although textual critics who have never seen a completely uncorrected foul proof seem reluctant to let the fancy die). That hypothesis was originally limited to play quartos and similar ephemera—it was partly prompted, indeed, by the belief that textual errors are more numerous in plays than in most other contemporary works. In Williams's new version, however, this conjectural irresponsibility has become the norm only for the printers of "more important books", and we are seemingly expected to believe that most of the books printed in England—and by implication, also throughout Europe—received no proof-correction at all. "Authors", we are told on page 60, "did not generally attend the press during the printing of their works, and proof sheets were not sent out of the print shop for correction by authors before the eighteenth century." If we substitute "professional playwrights" for "authors" there may be a measure of truth in that. But it would be interesting to know how Williams, as an editor of Beaumont and Fletcher, explains two curious phenomena: the single-sided proof sheet from Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* preserved in a binding in Brasenose College, and the fact that in *The Nice Valour* (c. 1625), Fletcher and Middleton show an author receiving proofs sent out by his printer.

When he turns from the printing to the publication of Shakespeare's works, Williams is generally more reliable—although there are still some lapses. *The Passionate Pilgrim*, it is claimed, "appeared in 1599 in an edition by William Jaggard, [and] was reprinted once in Shakespeare's lifetime". There are in fact three known early editions, of which that printed in 1599 for William Jaggard (by Thomas Judson) is the second. The first, known only from eleven leaves in the Folger Library, may possibly also date from 1599, but it was not printed by Judson and not necessarily published by Jaggard. Furthermore, while it is true that "The Phoenix and the Turtle" appeared

first in Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*, that fact does not place it among poems "presumably published without [Shakespeare's] knowledge" (p. 75). It is usually and reasonably assumed that all the "Phoenix and Turtle" poems appended to Chester's book were commissioned for that purpose.

Professor Ewbank's opinion notwithstanding, "solidly factual" is perhaps an overstated description of Williams's book—which is not one that I would myself recommend to anyone seriously interested in "studying the production of Renaissance books".

PETER W. M. BLAYNEY,
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Artificial Languages

Sir,—In his book *The Esperanto Movement* (1982), the author, Peter Forster, defined his position thus: "I must declare that I am in basic sympathy with (though not uncritical of) the aims of the Esperanto movement. I have myself been a member of the British and the Universal Esperanto Association since 1959 (approximately), but I was not particularly active in the movement before commencing this research in 1968. I did attend meetings of the Manchester Esperanto Society in a purely personal capacity between 1962 and 1966, but was not otherwise very active." Permit me to say that this strikes me as a more authoritative position than that of the "sceptical outsider" attributed by Geoffrey Sampson to Andrew Large in his review (July 4) of the latter's *The Artificial Language Movement*.

It frequently seems to me that Esperanto must be the only topic in the world which it is considered by some a positive advantage not to be thoroughly steeped in before writing about it. Had Andrew Large been able to speak fluent Esperanto, Geoffrey Sampson might have been left in no doubt that an Esperanto-speaking truck-driver, of whom I have known several, would be perfectly able to "talk his way past a border-post with dodgy paperwork"—provided, of course, the customs official used Esperanto. I know personally a couple of those, too.

W. AULD,
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Borodino

Sir,—John Bayley, in his review of Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (June 27), writes that "According to Tolstoy . . . General Kutuzov behind the lines at Borodino was so gripped by Madame de Staël's *Delphine* that he had no leisure to direct the battle." It is not clear whether or not Bayley is referring to Tolstoy's account in *War and Peace*. In *War and Peace*, however, just before the start of the battle Prince Andrew finds Kutuzov reading *Les Chevaliers du Cygne* by Mme de Genlis (Book 10, Chapter 16). Kutuzov's connection with Mme de Staël is mentioned only at two later points in the novel (Book 13, Chapter 17 and Book 15, Chapter 5) when reference is made to Kutuzov's writing letters to her. Whatever the opinion of historians, there seems little doubt that it was not Tolstoy's view that Kutuzov's novel-reading interfered with his actions at Borodino.

B. C. HURST,
Department of Education, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.

Sir,—It gave me great pleasure to read in John Bayley's review that General Kutuzov behind the lines at Borodino was so busy reading that he had no leisure to direct the battle.

I had long been familiar with de Ségur's account in *La Campagne de Russie* of Napoleon's inactivity in the same battle owing to his sufferings from

un douloureux accès de cette cruelle maladie dont il éprouve depuis longtemps les atteintes, la dysurie . . . un mal qui, de tous, est celui qui peut-être abat le plus les forces physiques et morales de l'homme.

So both armies had to manage without their commanders-in-chief. But Kutuzov had decided the more pleasant day.

GERALD ABRAHAM,
The Old School House, Eberme, Petworth, West Sussex.

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COMMENTARY

Redeeming features

Christopher Wintle

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Fidelio
Royal Opera House

Hans Keller once observed that well-motivated but bad criticism addresses itself to intentions rather than achievements. Such misdirected criticism might well overpraise the Royal Opera House's new production of *Fidelio* for the considerable intelligence of its conception, without making due allowance for a number of irritating flaws which mar its execution. On the other hand, it would almost certainly distance itself from the gleefully negative reports that followed the first night. Not only did these fail to address the production's intentions, but more importantly they thereby avoided recognizing the staging problems posed by this musically marvellous but theatrically imperfect work.

Unlike many producers, Andrei Serban can both listen to the music and identify the substantive issues of the drama in question; yet like others he can also fall victim to his own schemata. To take but one example, it is an

inspired idea for Leonore to don her disguise as Fidelio before a note of the work has sounded, and for her to remain during the overture on a stage dominated by a large pendent angel. For not only does the music clearly relate to Leonore (its E major tonality, for example, foreshadows her later *scena*), but her presence badly needs to be established early. Although by 1814, the revisions to the early versions of the opera of 1805 and 1806 had successfully scaled down the incidental comic roles of Jaquino and Marzelline (on the whole nicely done here), it is still not before the ninth number ("Abscheulicher!") that Leonore can fully unburden herself in private. (It is true that she has a prominent role in an earlier trio, where in the grouping she is intelligently separated from Marzelline and her father.) The use of an angel is not facetious: although the programme note refers to Wagner's description of Leonore as a "jubilant angel of light", the imagery itself is in the libretto. And the continuity between the overture and this ninth number is effectively sustained by the periodic burgeonings of high white lighting which underline the redemptive nature of her mission.

Less successful, however, are some of the corollaries to these decisions. Other pendants

are unnecessarily introduced, to particularly poor effect in the canonic quartet, which is marred, in any case, by the inexplicable cut of its preceding, establishing dialogue; and Pizarro's deadly vengeance aria is played solo against a contrasting black cloth, annulling the impact of the inappropriately hidden chorus's comments on his forbidding appearance.

What, though, of the music? Of the two acts, the second is better performed. Ironically, and perhaps appropriately, Leonore (Elizabeth Connell) only fully comes into her own in the structurally fascinating trio "Euch werde Lohne" and her inspiring duet "O namen, namenlose Freude" with Florestan (James King). The trio includes a Rocco (Gwynne Howell) who until this point does not show enough malleability for the part. The force of Florestan's fevered vision of Leonore as redeeming angel in the F major conclusion to his *scena* only serves to heighten regret that another pendent figure is introduced into its F minor prelude: the music testifies so explicitly to the cavernous darkness of his solitary dungeon that no other image than that supplied by his imagination will do. On the other hand, the enormously enlarged death-mask of Beethoven that presides over Sir Colin Davis's

spirited rather than refined performance of the great *Leonore* No 3 overture does not seem out of place. This interpolation of music omitted from the 1814 version has a long and honorable tradition behind it, and has the merit of setting apart the problematic final scene, which in certain quarters is notorious for offering a Schiller-inspired paean to conjugality in place of a satisfactory resolution of the loose ends of narrative. Since this overture is not entirely symphonic, no harm is done by Serban's accompanying montage of scenes of hope and terror drawn appropriately from the French Revolution.

Serban's imaginative apocalyptic tableau in the final scene brings the evening to a headily realizing in concrete terms Florestan's earlier vision of attaining "freedom in the heavenly kingdom" at the hands of Leonore. It also pulls together the polyglot collection of images of life, death, redemption and retribution that have permeated the production. In Act One, for instance, the bald, white prisoners shuffle into light looking more like sculptures off sarcophagi than humans. This final tableau is also the last scene that Davis will conduct as musical director of Covent Garden, and as such marks a worthy conclusion.

Stylish touches

H. R. Woudhuysen

SHAKESPEARE
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

As with *The Magic Flute* and its serpent, the quality of a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can often be assessed by what sort of ass's head Bottom gets and how Moonshine's dog is treated. At Stratford, Bottom with the head on looks much the same as Bottom without it — only his ears seem at all changed and they are more bunny-like than asinine. He is hardly the monster Puck describes to Oberon. Similarly, Moonshine's dog must have escaped, or had better doggy things to get on with, for he does not appear: his presence is signalled simply by a collar on the end of a stick. Moonshine has also apparently lost his lantern, and dropped his bush of thorn, for they are not to be seen. It might be kinder to say no more about this latest offering from the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The sad fact is, however, that Bill Alexander's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, designed by William Dudley, offers what some Stratford audiences have long feared — the triumph of style over content. Oblivious to the text, unworried by the words, dazzled by its own prettiness, this production moves the play away from the world of the theatre to set it in a nursery world fabricated from modern, sentimental notions of Edwardian childhood. An infantile

fantasy prevails both in Athens and in the wood (Hermia eventually falls asleep sucking her thumb). The world of fairy is not drawn from Arthur Rackham, nor even from post-Rackham, it is taken out of Cicely M. Barker's saccharine *Flower Paties*, with giant leaves and flowers. Some touches of Disney versions of Lewis Carroll and J. M. Barrie have been added. It is a devastatingly unnerotic ambience for a play that is so concerned with love and desire, poetry and imagination.

The grown-ups begin the play and style dictates that Theseus ("I woo'd thee with my sword") and Hippolyta look as if they have come out of *Edward and Mrs Simpson*: this makes little sense here and none in Act Five. It can safely be forgotten about in the intervening scenes. One of the play's best jokes is to suggest to the audience just how ghastly young people are — spiteful, malicious and self-obsessed. The production should not confirm that this is the case but here it does. It is hard to feel the slightest interest in, or sympathy for, anyone in the play, least of all for Hippolyta, whose doubling with Titania is fashionably inconsequential — as if the dream were only a woman's sexual fantasy. The Athenian women come straight out of a weak television sitcom: easy to follow, embarrassing and unfunny. Even the play within the play falls flat.

The actors do not listen to each other and sometimes seem not to know or to care what they are saying. Style and effect so dominate the production that it never makes contact with the play: the result is bland, unilluminating and vulgar.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 286

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than August 8. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.

Esther, marked "Author, Author 286" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on August 15.

1 And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumbered and enormous polyp
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battering upon huge squallid forms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep.

2 Hugest of living creatures, on the deep
Stretched like a promontory, sleeps or swims,
And seems a moving land, and at his gills
Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out a sea.

3 Through poisonous fumes, sea-things Pensive
Goes—clogged sword, clear, aimless mirror,
With nothing to strike at or blind in the frothy
shadows.

Competition No 283

Winner: Mrs J. Edwards

Answers:

1: "Oh no said the populations
Getting out of bed into slippers,
"What lovely weather!
Today is Sunday!"

Laura Riding, "Sunday"

2: The sky dressed in the sound of Sunday colours
The season (fall of Antigone and Philomela)
The trains (picturesque destinations) mislead.
The girls (white as their prayer-books) are released,
Rustle in lavender and thyme
From incense back to houses where
Their white pianos cool each thirty square.

Charles Tomlinson, "The Bells, A Period Piece"

3: Down the road someone is practicing scales,
The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of
tail,
Men's heart expands to flatter with his ear
For this is Sunday morning, Pete's great bazaar.

Louis MacNiece, "Sunday Morning"

Extravagant needs

Zachary Leader

Hannah and Her Sisters
Odeon, Leicester Square

At the heart of Woody Allen's handsome new film lies an image of womanly perfection. Hannah (Mia Farrow) is sweet, talented, intelligent and good-looking. She is a serious and successful actress, contented and serenely capable mother of four, a loving wife, sister, daughter. All this perfection, though, leads to problems. Hannah is loved and admired, but she is also envied. Her two sisters, who are only humanly attractive, contrive in subtle and unconscious ways to assert themselves at her expense. Lee, played by Barbara Hershey, is unhappy with the rigid, depressive painter (Max Von Sydow) with whom she lives, and allows herself to fall for the advances of Hannah's husband, Elliot, played by Michael Caine. Holly (Dianne Wiest) not only ends up married to Hannah's first husband, Mickey, played by Allen himself, but succeeds in getting pregnant by him — something Hannah herself couldn't manage. All the principal players — sisters and husbands — love Hannah, but are also made to feel inadequate by her easy health and good fortune. Hannah, they complain, has no "needs", is too happy and self-contained to require their care.

In some ways this situation recalls Allen's least likeable film, *Stardust Memories* (1980). There too we were asked to sympathize with a talented and successful central figure (Allen himself) surrounded by lesser mortals, a gallery of insensitive and envious grotesques. But the tone of the earlier film was very dark, full of anger and contempt, as well as an unending "lonely at the top" strain of self-pity. *Hannah and Her Sisters* is gentler and more generous, and Allen succeeds in enlisting our sympathies for its put-upon central character by stepping aside and giving the role to Mia Farrow, with whom, on the evidence of this and his three previous pictures, he is wholly besotted (the connections between Farrow and Hannah are obvious, and played upon by the film's publicity: Farrow too comes from a theatrical family, has several sisters, seven of her eight children appear in the film, as does her mother, Maureen O'Sullivan, and much of the film is shot in her apartment on the Upper West Side). Farrow's excellent performance does much to make her difficult role plausible and sympathetic.

The disappointment of the film is Allen's own part: Mickey Sachs is the familiar Woody Allen figure: a neurotic TV writer-producer, a hypochondriac, a man terrified of dying, and in search of the meaning of life. Too many of his scenes, even some of his jokes (about jogging

and analysis, for instance) are predictable. This is not to say that they're unfunny, but that they belong to an earlier and less ambitious sort of picture. That Allen can be something more than this figure — that he is, in fact, an excellent actor — was clear from *Manhattan* (1979), as well as from his performances in quite different roles in *The Front* (1976) and *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984). Here, all in part of Mickey offers Allen is two brief moments — reaction shots, in effect — in which he thinks he's going to die. These moments are funny, but they also tell us how crippling and painful Mickey's sort of neurosis can be.

The film registers the inadequacies of Hannah's "family" with gentle affection. Like Mickey at the end of the picture, Allen seems to have made his peace with the world. Though he notes its imperfections, he's also determined to take pleasure in what remains. Ellen may be self-regarding, but he's also loving and capable of genuine feeling. When he comes Lee with a sappy poem by E. E. Cummings ("nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands", is how it concludes), the film registers the soporific without quite mocking it. It may be the sort of woman who could fall for the painter, Frederick, with his banal and pretentious devotion to high culture (his drawings, interestingly, recall Andrew Wyeth, the painterly equivalent of Cummings), but she is also immensely attractive. Holly, Hannah's other sister, is feckless and hopeless, with insecure and unstable. She borrows money from Hannah (to start a catering business) and takes time off "to write" and can't stand it when Hannah suggests, with perfect tact and good sense, that her plans might be unrealistic. But Holly is also lovable, and by the end of the film she's managed not only to get pregnant but to produce a decent film-script. People, in other words, aren't all that bad, and sometimes they can even surprise you.

That all the characters, even the most broadly drawn minor ones (especially David Stern as the perfectly named rock star, "The Fly", and Sam Waterston as a horribly plausible architect-philanderer) have their attractions of a piece with the generous, idealizing look of the film. New York is as beautiful here as Carlo Di Palma's colour, as it was in *Manhattan*. Willis's monochrome in *Manhattan* was an affluent good taste of the film, though together with its exclusive concern with a sonal relations, may put some people off at least technical matters — Allen's perfectionism and obsession with craft — are put to the service of a more than merely technical end (for a while, in *Zelig* and *The Purple Heart of Cairo*, it looked as though Allen was going the way of Stanley Kubrick). This film may have limitations, but it represents a welcome and enjoyable return to form.

The intuitive coxcomb

Pat Rogers

HELENE KOON
Colley Cibber: A biography
242pp. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
08131 1551 5

It is the fate of most laureates to lose more than their literary reputation when they accept office. Colley Cibber squandered any credibility he had built up over the years as a man of the theatre when George II awarded him the bays, so that nowadays he enjoys a historical *locus standi* about level with that of Bubb Dodington or Lumpy Stevens. His plays are admired by scholars, but lying in unfrequented country (sentimental comedy, Shakespearean improvement, heroic tragedy) are seldom revived. He wrote the earliest widely known autobiography in the language, the *Apology* for his own life (1740). But he tangled with his betters — Fielding and Pope, notably — and he lived too long. Helene Koon cites the gambling odds at White's club on his future life-span; in his late seventies he was still reckoned a better prospect than Beau Nash (three years his junior), though Nash survived him in the end. If Cibber had died at sixty, he would have been smaller but a kinder entry in our collective memory.

Helene Koon resents the condescension of history towards all members of the dramatic profession, believing that live drama is traduced by dead scholarship. Cibber's career, she asserts, "stands as a paradigm of the actor's fate".

While he was on the stage, his presence was vividly intense, but once he was gone, it vanished like the character when the curtain falls . . . He believed his work would justify him in the eyes of posterity. He was wrong. The wickedly witty caricatures of Pope and Fielding have replaced the human being and little is left to refute them. The actor's art is ephemeral: the mask of the *Apology* became fixed in the *Dunciad* . . .

In order to sustain this argument, Koon goes on to summon up an equally vanished notion of the Hanoverian world-view: "In an age that worshipped intellect and logic, Colley Cibber was an actor to the core, living by intuition and emotion." Cibber played the role of a brainless coxcomb, but "from behind the Foppington mask emerges a quite different person . . . a sensitive creative artist who hated ugliness, pain, and violence". In summary, "Foppington

was an impostor, but the man who created him was real, a pragmatic dreamer captivated by the illusion even as he operated the stage machinery."

This view of the central character gives Koon's biography an ordering principle, and while it leads to some unconvincing donning and doffing of masks it provides the only relief from stage history. There will be too much for some tastes along the lines of "Behind the facade of a Foppington, he could escape for a few hours into a world where everything was sure to end well". Unsurprisingly, "the magic of the theater never failed" Cibber; whereas the untheatrical Pope "found in Cibber's Foppington mask a repellent image of all the values he most disliked". There is a truth concealed here, but the terminology of "images" and "make believe" obscures more than it reveals. It is the kind of narrative, too, where the younger Cibber, Theophilus, is matily termed

"Theo", and where, in a prologue couched in a wholly different mode from the rest of the text, the first night of *Love's Last Shift* is called to mind: "Colley jumped as a hand touched his shoulder, and he turned quickly to find Tom Southerne standing beside him . . . Now, almost invisible in his rich black suit, his silver sword flickering in the dim light, Southerne took Cibber by the hand and offered a few words apparently meant as encouragement."

The book will mainly be of use as a painstaking record of everything that can now be gleaned about Cibber's day-to-day life. On Cibber in the playhouse, Koon does not take us much beyond R. H. Barker's very good account, *Mr Cibber of Drury Lane* (1939). Indeed, Barker was more adept in standing back to consider general issues, such as the literary quarrels, and he managed to avoid Koon's dull chronicling style ("Other than Mist's constant sniping, the rest of the 1717-18 season went



William Hogarth's portrait of the murderess Sarah Malcolm (1733): reproduced from *Crime and the Law in English Satirical Prints 1600-1832* by J. A. Sharpe (318pp. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, £38, 085964 176 7).

along fairly smoothly, although Drury Lane lost one of its best character actors when William Bowen was killed in a duel"). Where Koon excels is in the fullness of her documentation and the energy of her genealogical searches: if you want to know when Cibber's grandchildren were christened, this is the place to go. It is a struggle to try to make past performances come alive, and one can forgive the author if her text occasionally resembles a showbiz life-story: "The rest of the cast was excellent: Susannah Verbruggen was dazzling as the frivolous Narcissa, and Katharine Cibber was her charming and giddy companion, Hilaria."

One major weakness concerns the lazy sense Koon has of political issues. Apart from having Prince Charles Edward's army stepping as far south as Devon, "an easy march to London", she distorts much of the history by opposing Cibber's court Whiggery to a counter force of "Tories", in which camp she lumps everyone from Fielding down who was not in the Walpole circle. The absurdity of this procedure becomes most manifest in a passage such as the following: "At the beginning of February [1742] came Walpole's long-expected fall, but not the equally long-awaited end of Whig administration . . . The Tories, out since 1715, were frustrated and bitter, and in Pope's eyes the Whig symbol was Colley Cibber, whose smiling face was everywhere he turned." In fact Pope had far too deep a sense of political reality to make any such wild misjudgment. It should be added that Koon wishes to claim for Fielding the well-known attack on Cibber entitled *The Laureate; or, the Right Side of Colley Cibber* (1740). The case is not untenable, though I think not plausible on internal grounds; but Koon's presentation of this case is feeble, bibliographically naive and historically dodgy. Fielding scholars will not find much reason to think again about the attribution on this showing.

Nevertheless, Koon has written a readable and agreeably positive account of a man she evidently finds congenial. That is a virtue, and so it is to write a short book about a long life. Cibber, like other flashy young toffs, aged into a dignified old buffer, with the presence to grace his role of aristocratic duncehood. What Rossini called the "péchés de vieillesse" became him, better than the half-hearted scrapes of his early years. He may not have been as malign as Helene Koon would have it, for it is his weaknesses and his miscalculations which have preserved his name.

The sentimental satirist

T. O. Treadwell

JAMES MORWOOD
The Life and Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan
200pp. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.
£12.50.

PETER DAVISON (Editor)
Sheridan Comedies: A selection of critical essays
223pp. Macmillan. £20 (paperback, £5.95).
033211421

Sheridan's reputation is equivocal. After 200 years his three major comedies continue to hold the stage, but his popularity among academic students of drama remains comparatively low. His dramatic works and his letters have been admirably edited by Cecil Price, but little sustained critical analysis has been devoted to his plays, and there has been no large-scale scholarly biography since Walter Sichel's ponderous volumes were published in 1909. A number of good anecdotes about Sheridan survive, though, and he moved in fashionable circles in what is traditionally regarded as a glamorous age, and the combination has made him a favourite subject for writers of "popular" lives, of which at least five, of varying degrees of accuracy and critical sophistication, have been published since Sichel's work. James Morwood's is the latest in this line. Despite its magnificent title, *The Life and Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* is a modest

work. Morwood states frankly that he lays no claim to biographical originality, and while he offers fairly extended discussion of the major plays, there is no more than a page or so on *A Trip to Scarborough* and *The Camp*, while *St Patrick's Day* merits only a short paragraph. A brief section is devoted to the early poetry, but the 1779 "Verses to the Memory of Garrick", which Byron thought the best of monologues and which is Sheridan's most sustained poetic achievement, is dismissed in a sentence. The political orations are treated in terms of the impression they made on Sheridan's contemporaries, rather than analysed as pieces of rhetoric.

The justification for a "life and works" biography must lie in the assumption that there is an important relationship between the two. This is not at all unreasonable, but Morwood makes only the most tenuous connection between Sheridan's writings and his character as it was shaped by his experiences. He suggests, as previous biographers have done, that Sheridan, the Irish actor's son, felt a lifelong sense of social insecurity despite his successes in the fashionable world to which his early fame gave him an entrée, but no examination is offered of the ways in which this unease may have expressed itself in his work. It has been argued, for example, that Sheridan's insecurity produced a powerful need to please, and that this led to his yielding in his comedies to the prevailing taste for the sentimental at the cost of suppressing his natural gift for satire. What- ever the merits of this idea, it proposes a relationship of life to work more interesting than such commonplaces as the suggestion, which

this biography purveys, that *The Rivals* is concerned with duelling and elopement because Sheridan had recently been engaged in both activities.

The most serious weakness of Morwood's survey of Sheridan's career as a dramatist is his failure to see it in the context of the literary or theatrical climate of the time. He discusses the ambivalence in the presentation of Charles Surface, the good-hearted prodigal, but he shows no awareness of the debate on the propriety and function of such "mixed" characters that had been raging at least since the publication of *Tom Jones*. The whole issue of sentimental comedy goes unexplored. Dryden's *Spanish Fryar* (1681) is said, without explanation, to have left its mark on *The Duenna*, but later and much more obvious analogues go unmentioned.

Unlike some other recent biographers, however, Morwood works hard to be objective about his subject. He tries half-heartedly to excuse Sheridan's disastrous financial incompetence during his tenure as manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, but his account of this period confirms the general view of Sheridan's irresponsibility. He is fair, too, about Sheridan's political career, allowing him credit for his relatively progressive views on Catholic emancipation, Ireland and the revolution in France, but pointing out that his principles were rarely disinterested and concluding that he made little difference to the political life of his time; it seems ironically appropriate that his speeches at the trial of Warren Hastings, Sheridan's greatest moment in public life, were delivered for a lost cause.

Peter Davison's "Casebook" volume on the comedies (*The Duenna* is inexplicably omitted) reflects the dearth of serious attention Sheridan has received from critics in our own time. Of the three modern essays devoted to *The Rivals*, for example, G. H. Nettleton's investigation of Lydia Languish's circulating library books has very little to say about the play, the article by Mark Auburn is largely devoted to stage history and the extract by A. N. Kaul is taken from a work that is broadly dismissive of Sheridan's dramatic achievements. Davison reprints a quantity of rather miscellaneous Sheridaniana, including selections from works by and about Sheridan's father, excerpts from the political orations, a speech from *Pizarro* together with a passage of critical commentary on it, and memoranda dealing with the wages owing to sweepers and lampmen. While none of this material is uninteresting in itself, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that it has been included to make up weight.

But these are quibbles. The aim of the Casebook series is to make more generally accessible material otherwise available only in research libraries, and Davison's volume fulfils this purpose very well. Leonard J. Neff's important article on Sheridan and Sentimentalism (which James Morwood might profitably have consulted) particularly merits wider circulation, while Jack Durant's ingenious investigation of the moral imperatives implicit in *The School for Scandal* in terms of the values informing Sheridan's attack on Warren Hastings relates the life to the work in a way that genuinely illuminates both.

The people and the play

John Wilders

DAVID UNDERDOWN
Rebel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular politics and culture in England 1603-1660
 324pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
 0198227957
MICHAEL D. BRISTOL
Carnival and Theater: Plebeian culture and the structure of authority in Renaissance England
 273pp. Methuen. £21.
 0416350704
WALTER COHEN
Drama of a Nation: Public theater in Renaissance England and Spain
 416pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. \$35.
 0801417937

With characteristic directness David Underdown explains at the outset of *Rebel, Riot and Rebellion* what his intentions are:

This book addresses two simple and straightforward questions: first, how did the English common people behave during the civil wars and revolutions of 1640-60; and, second, how can we explain that behaviour?

He has limited his enquiries mostly to the counties of Dorset, Wiltshire and his native Somerset, and his admirably undogmatic conclusions are supported by a vast quantity of specific, detailed, fully documented evidence, much of it original, the fruit of exhaustive research into parish records, sermons, memoirs, legal documents, popular ballads and the work of his fellow-historians. He knows exactly what the vicar of Alton Pancras in Dorset was doing on a certain Sunday in 1607: visiting nearby Cheselbourne with his parishioners for a football match. He also knows that George Herbert's successor at Bemerton was not only a liturgical innovator who converted the communion table into an altar, but that he "had a maypole set up at his front door, attended the bowls and skittle-playing on Sunday evenings and entertained the fiddlers", activities which were perfectly consistent with his Laudian churchmanship.

In spite of the copiousness of the information he has gathered, Underdown never loses sight of the central questions he has put to himself: why, for example, did the doctrine of divine election and the pleas for a gospel-preaching ministry meet with a ready response from some parts of the West Country and not from others; why was the restoration of Charles II greeted with such popular acclaim? Indeed, one of his most remarkable achievements is to have assembled so firmly all this

multifarious and at times contradictory information. But the real strength of his study lies in its illuminating detail. In page after page he reveals the intimate, domestic behaviour of ordinary rural people, suffering, for example, the disorderliness of unpaid troops who ranged about the country "breaking and robbing houses and passengers, and driving away sheep and other cattle". He also reveals their resourcefulness, as when the parishioners of Castle Cary, finding their church vestments confiscated by Parliament's army, "promptly borrowed replacements from North Cadbury".

Eventually he accounts for differences in ecclesiastical and political allegiance during these twenty years of upheaval by distinctions between regional cultures which, in turn, arose from "different stages of social and economic development", especially those between the arable farmers, tightly organized around the church and manor house and therefore relatively stable and conservative, and the cattle-grazing farmers, located on small, isolated farms and hence more independent and less bound by traditional hierarchies. This explanation, he insists, is not one of crude economic determinism. The very fullness of his evidence prevents any such simplification.

The popular, traditional festivities which frequently crop up in Underdown's enquiries—the May Games, church ales, clownings and saturnalia—are the subject of Michael D. Bristol's *Carnival and Theater*. They are used as evidence, however, in a very different kind of enterprise, an approach to the drama of the Renaissance, including the plays of Shakespeare, in which clowns occupy the same stage as kings in that "mungrell tragi-comedy" to which Sidney objected and which had all but vanished by the time the more socially exclusive theatres opened after the Restoration. Much of Bristol's argument therefore consists of a kind of alternative history of English culture in which Thomas Nashe celebrates the red herring and the plente of the port of Yarmouth, Will Kempe dances from London to Norwich, engaging in comic, improvised repartee along the way, and Strumbo the clown in the anonymous play of *Locrine* resists and survives the authority of his superiors.

Unlike Underdown, however, who rests his case on abundant examples of actual occurrences of folk rituals, Bristol relies heavily on the generalizations of sociologists and literary theorists such as Emile Durkheim, Arnold van Gennep and especially the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. Hence, for all his professedly Marxist sympathies for the irreverence, openness, buoyancy and resourcefulness of the English proletariat, he seldom actually admits them into his pages but observes them from a

distance through the eyes of modern theorists:

Carnival is an heuristic instrument of considerable scope and flexibility. Though it is a festive and primarily symbolic activity, it has immediate pragmatic aims, most immediately that of objectifying a collective determination to conserve the authority of the community to set its own standards of behaviour and social discipline, and to enforce those standards by appropriate means. At the same time Carnival is a form of resistance to arbitrarily imposed forms of domination, especially when the constraints imposed are perceived as an aggression against the customary norms of surveillance and social control.

Underdown would not, I think, disagree with this description, but how much more immediate and telling—indeed more intelligible—is his statement that as Charles II passed over Blackheath on his return to London, the country people welcomed his cavalcade with "the long-forbidden morris dances".

Nevertheless, Bristol's approach has its rewards. He makes better sense than anyone of the clowning in *Dr Faustus*, which he sees not as an ironic commentary on the futility of the hero's aspirations to power but as a cheeky, irresponsible travesty of them, a stubbornly plebeian refusal to take serious things seriously. In this reading of the play, its very disunity (which has so much distressed those critics for whom unity is everything) is its point. But it is when he is dealing with relatively simple plays such as *Locrine* and *The Merry Devil of Edmonstone* that he is most persuasive. Shakespeare is too complex—too sophisticated, perhaps—to be accommodated within the theories that Bristol has set up.

Bottom is not an individual subject or character at all, but a temporary name assumed by a public figure whose willingness to play all the parts is a comic uncrowning of limited identity and social discrimination.

C. L. Barber, whose approach was not unlike Bristol's (and whom he mentions with approval), recognized that Bottom was a figure derived from folk culture but was at the same time "the most humanly credible and appealing character Shakespeare had yet created". The danger of any approach to Shakespeare by way of his origins is to reduce the plays back to their origins or, indeed, to see them all as different versions of the same play. When Bristol declares that not only Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch but also Claudius and Lear are all "figures of Carnival misrule" we are forced to realize that it is a danger he has not avoided.

Walter Cohen's stance is also consistently Marxist. Both he and Bristol recognize the contribution made to Renaissance drama by traditional, popular culture and both account for its distinctive features and preoccupations by the political and economic conditions in which it was produced. Cohen's attitude is,

however, much more flexible. While recognizing popular elements in Jonsonian comedy, for example, he insists that without his classical inheritance Jonson's plays could simply not have been written. His scope is also far greater—nothing less than the development of drama in Spain and England from its classical and medieval origins to the closure of theatres in the early seventeenth century. And since he is anxious to stress the uniquely shared features of these two national cultures, he frequently makes comparisons between them and those of the Scandinavian and other European countries. At the same time his purposes are more overtly and committedly political. He only applies Marxist theories to the elucidation of specific plays and thereby attempts a dedication of his own procedure, but also seems distinctively tragic and satirical qualities of Renaissance drama as the product of a period which was moving from a monarchical absolutism to an equally oppressive capitalism. Hence the outcasts and lower-class characters in *King Lear* "articulate a thoroughgoing critique of hierarchy without discovering a political vehicle for their beliefs", a brilliant insight.

Drama of a Nation is thus designed not only as an account of the evolution of Renaissance drama and of the societies which produced it, but as "an attempt to appropriate drama of the public theater for new uses, to enlist it in a socialist program (which) will therefore gain support from the plays themselves". That Cohen has largely fulfilled these ambitions is itself astonishing, but he has, in the process, succeeded in casting new light on scores of individual plays. His point of view more revealing in relation to tragedy and comedy than romantic comedy—to *King Lear*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Vega's Fuente Ovejuna* and *The Alchemist* rather than *The Merchant of Venice*. He has many sixteenth-century romantic comedies, for example, are really about "the solution of aristocratic problems by a process of transmutation"? But even when he provokes disagreement, his judgments are radical and bold enough to make us re-examine our own, and there are times when he seems to get right to the heart of the matter:

The audience witnessing a national history play in public theater comes to feel that its own history is being performed. In a sense, such a belief is a complete illusion, especially since the crown's interest were not ultimately national. But it is also a power, a live insistence on the right of the populace to judge the ruling class's exercise of state power. In this respect the national history play in the public theater is inherently subversive aristocratic ideology.

Drama of a Nation is a substantial book and am sure that its challenging, original length will compel me to return to it time and again.

have it that this Priapus is an unconscious in the text, and that the director was being out of a conflict in the play which Shakespeare had tried to repress. Perhaps this hypothesis does Muir an injustice, but he does try to dismiss comparable interpretations (Karl Brecht's etc) by simply invoking *Nagasaki*. Capability, or the motto "trust Shakespeare". In the end, it may be that the only adequate response to the new brutalism is to return to the language of the plays, and show what has been literalized and made into a scenic *things* (stage properties and *Nagasaki* forms); how Shakespeare's poetry, an object of fetish when it is over-materialized. The book might be weighed by analyzing the text of Derek Jarman's film *The Tempest*, which is a Sycorax-Mae West singing "Stormy Weather", and a masque, or clutch, of jolly boys who have anything but lust for *Miranda* on their minds. Interestingly, Muir is quite close to the matter when he discusses other chapters, the masque scene in *Measure for Measure*, and the ways in which, in the 1630s, Ford created his own version of Shakespeare's late plays, and kept them in their poetry. One might, hope that in his late years strove to accommodate what he insights, and direct our responses with more awareness that we may be living in the Jones's words, at the turn of a civilization.

An answering inwardness

Robert Boyers

HAROLD ROSENBERG
Art and Other Serious Matters
 332pp.
 The Case of the Baffled Radical
 293pp.
 University of Chicago Press. £21.25 each.
 022672694 and 0226726924

There is a curious and instructive paradox in Harold Rosenberg's writings on art. Long identified with the aesthetics of what he called Action Painting, he championed an ideal of contemporary art as "a gesture of liberation from Value—political, esthetic, moral". At the same time, he wrote a prose that positively bristles with opinions, that seems everywhere bent on challenging inflated reputations or asserting the importance of works previously undervalued or misunderstood. In no sense an ideologue or a narrow partisan of a particular look, he seemed none the less to believe in value and to feel quite comfortable about referring to a given work as "a masterpiece" and to another as "the best painting" in a series. Though he scorned F. R. Leavis and other *Scrutiny* writers for their devotion "to a concept of aesthetic 'success'", Rosenberg wrote as a man who not only knew what he liked but was rarely in doubt about his preferences once they had been formulated. He would speak now and then of there being today "only one person cultures", so that assertions of value could make sense only within the framework of a given individual's preferences and aversions. No value judgments could be expected to have a general validity in a society without a comprehensive cultural order. But Rosenberg's judgments were none the less advanced on the assumption that certain observations were clearly true, others unreliable. Those who were willing to approach works of art in the way Rosenberg recommended ought to have been able to arrive at more or less similar conclusions.

Rosenberg was an immensely influential critic, and never more than in the final decade of his life when he wrote regularly on art for the *New Yorker*. In those years from the late 1960s until the time of his death in 1978, his views on art had become so much a part of the American scene that American artists themselves often thought him responsible for important developments in painting and sculpture. Oddly, he was hostile to much of the work that emerged in the 1960s and 70s, and his late essays on artists he had earlier admired were launched as holding actions against a tide that had already brought about major changes.

The two posthumous volumes of essays and interviews recently issued by the University of Chicago Press—which has now published the complete writings of Rosenberg in nine volumes—are in many respects as vital and impressive as books like *The Tradition of the New and The Anxious Object*, which originally established his reputation. But both of the collections remind us again that Rosenberg's allegiances remained with artists like Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky and Jackson Pollock. His admiration for particular works by more recently successful figures like Jasper Johns or Robert Rauschenberg is grudging at best. Always he responds to the work of such figures as tokens of a decline which affects not only the status of the newer art but the spiritual quality of our civilization. For Rosenberg, the best artists are by definition artists of "the free imagination", and their works have the effect of intensifying and "deepening" individual experience. Artists like Johns and Rauschenberg might have appropriated for their own purposes procedures or formal elements associated with the abstract expressionists, but they tended to think of art "as a problem-solving activity" or as a device for "refurbishing the familiar". Whatever the reach of Rosenberg's influence, it was clear to him and those who took encouragement from him that no critical voice could control the process by which contemporary work became "a commodity of the art market".

Never inclined to elegy or to plaintive reminiscence on the good old days, Rosenberg in his late years strove to accommodate what he could in the new art. He even found pleasant things to say about an apostle of post-modernism like Marshall McLuhan, with his "refusal to see any difference except as a means of presentation between works of art and the products of the media". At least McLuhan understood that changes had taken place in our culture, that it was no longer possible to talk about works of art or about ideas as they were talked about a hundred years earlier. If McLuhan tended to reduce all cultural developments to "a crude pageant whose inner meaning is man's metamorphosis through the media", and Andy Warhol effaced "the century-old tension between the serious artist and the majority culture", they did at the same time confound the simple-minded view that intelligent reactions to art can be produced by applying formal criteria. Rosenberg never allowed his reader to forget that the post-modern was the domain of cheap art-substitutes and easy reversals of commonly accepted assumptions. But he continued to make discriminations and to believe that understanding of post-modernism might contribute to a victory over critical clichés which clouded our view of reality. If there was no long-term sustaining potential in the ostensibly "new" creations of post-modern writers and artists, their "zeal for the new" at least held out the hope of better things to come.

These posthumous essays are as various and in some ways as full of surprises as the earlier books. The subject-matter ranges from painting and sculpture to photography, film, literary theory, politics and fiction. The most remarkable single pieces are the three substantial essays on Johns, de Kooning and Saul Steinberg in *Art and Other Serious Matters*; the most memorable items in the other book include an attack on Marcel Ophüls's film *The Memory of Justice*, a meditation on portrait photography, and a long interview with Melvin M. Tumin entitled "What is Art?", which took place six months before Rosenberg's death. But even a 1944 essay on Arthur Koestler has about it the distinguishing marks of his extraordinarily direct and muscular criticism, with its special resistance to "glibness", "clichés", "mechanical dichotomy", and the substitution of "ideas" for "living" or "dramatic" representation. Rosenberg himself was a first-rate and sometimes compulsive phrase-maker whose instinct for controversy and political sophistication surely responded to what was most vital in Koestler. And one can only surmise that Koestler would have responded enthusiastically to a passage like the following from Rosenberg's blistering essay on Ophüls:

Perhaps I should confess at the outset that I regard commiseration for the Nazis as "human beings" as intellectually degrading and morally degenerate. To me, concern about a square deal for the Nuremberg defendants belongs at best to the kind of sentimentality that led Jean Valjean to rescue the bloodhound Inspector Javert who had trailed him for years from execution by the Paris revolutionaries. To defend the human status of Elsie Corpman, of whose "heroism" consisted in purging themselves of all traces of human feeling, who stood at the doors of gas chambers making jokes while prodding children inside, represents, in my opinion, a decadent application of the Christian principle of turning the other cheek and returning good for evil. . . . To forgive acts of viciousness suffered by others is the meanest condition into which one can be cast by the feeling of self-righteousness and the wish to relieve the heart of the burden of demanding revenge. . . . In the twilight of Christian charity, the true defender of civilization is not the practitioner of universal forbearance but the unswerving, single-minded angel of reprisal in whose entire organism there is not a soft spot. No waiving. Catch him and apply the sentence.

Some spoke of this sort of thing in Rosenberg as an example of a "cantankerous" mind, or of an arrogant inclination to dismissive scorn. I prefer Alfred Kazin's characterization of Rosenberg as a "bitterly independent critical mind" who "reminds us how passionate a force intelligence can be". And though Rosenberg made his greatest impact as an art critic, he surely wrote memorably on everything to which he turned his attention.

It is not possible to say what continuing influence Rosenberg's essays will have. The battles he fought on behalf of de Kooning and other Action Painters have already been won, and it is no longer necessary to remind people who are interested in modern art that earlier painters like Klee and Miró and even Mondrian anticipated or paved the way for painters whose radical departures from those fore-run-

ners often made it hard to discern their common enterprise. Probably the most important achievement of Rosenberg's career was the example he set of treating the best modern art as a spiritual victory over academicism and triviality. He saw serious art as an activity of persons who valued themselves, who wished to preserve what were genuinely their own thoughts and feelings. This was exemplary in a time which was hostile to radical individualism and at least suspicious of the "multifariousness" and the "vulgarity" that Rosenberg prized in de Kooning, as in writers like Rabelais and Cervantes. That radical individualism may justly be criticized today as the all too visible component of a culture of narcissism, may hardly be said to discredit it as an ideal. Like other ideals, its role in promoting a false consciousness among many persons ill-equipped to appreciate it as an exigent and elusive goal can indicate only that a society like ours can absorb and cheapen anything. Rosenberg's powerful vision of the great artist continually seeking, grasping, losing, and fitfully recovering fragments of a new meaning or coherence, is a bracing instance of the critical intelligence affirming a value beyond all but a few.

Rosenberg's ambivalent, sometimes contradictory handling of the question of value is a clue to what was distinctive in him. He refused to turn himself into an institution, refused to erect on the basis of more or less coherent insights a rigorous system that might assist others in their transactions with unfamiliar things. What usually passed for value was to him the fetish of persons who were afraid not to know what they thought, for whom panic was the only available emotion in the face of challenge. Others, like Leavis, who had promised a fearlessly independent approach to literary issues, had sought to realize their ideals by pressing us to adhere to apparently unassailable "formulas and verdicts". Marxist critics like Georg Lukács too often attempted to resolve difficult questions by resorting to "abstract disputation" and by applying standards derived from their study of accredited masterpieces to which they were inordinately attached.

Rosenberg insisted upon a fresh response to works which were themselves ideally conceived freshly and honestly. This was not a call for a naive or untutored response to art. It was part of his sense that value, where it exists, is always the result of an experience. What was truly valuable in a work was its expression of a certain "inwardness" which could be apprehended only by an answering inwardness attuned to the mysterious laws controlling a particular kind of expression. If value too often signalled a view of art as a succession of objects immobilized as masterpieces, Rosenberg promoted an alternative view of value as a respect for the activity of a mind which had "the strength, surprise, emotional range, and, on occasion, the arbitrariness, of a temperament". He spoke of the modern art he liked as "a gesture of liberation from Value" because he wished with all of his intelligence to resist the commodification to which art was constantly susceptible. But he knew better than to suggest that one thing was finally no better, no more moving or engaging than another. When he wrote of one artist's drawing too heavily "from his subjects", in contrast to others "who draw their work out of themselves and their medium"; or of one who "habituated himself to stating his feelings rather than discovering them or developing them", he was himself elaborating a defence of value which informed everything he wrote. If he was not always a reliable guide to an art scene that often defied simple description he was surely the most provocative critic of his time and remains for many of us an indispensable model of intellectual force and versatility.

Ernst: Plein or Revolution by Night by Malcolm Gee (32pp. Tate Gallery. £2.95, 0 946590 23 0) is the most recent of the Tate Modern Masterpieces series of monographs "designed to provide detailed, informative introductions to key works in the Tate Gallery's collection of modern art". A reproduction of the work, painted by Max Ernst in 1921 and acquired by the Tate in 1981, is accompanied by a text discussing the painting in the context of the Surrealist movement and the influence of Freud,

Stencil and strip-tease

Lucy Ellmann

PAUL TAYLOR (Editor)
Juan Davila: Hysterical tears
 108pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. GMP. £14.95.
 090704087 X

Relying heavily on recent styles of figurative art, pornography and comic strips (as well as on the forbearance of the viewer), Juan Davila constructs what he calls a discourse about discourse. By appropriating the most banal trademarks of other artists—Picasso's cock-eyed *femmes fatales*, Oldenburg's dissolute bath-tubs, Immendorf's phallic swastikas, and Allen Jones's Barbarella legs in their wrinkly thighs and stiletto heels—his slick, violent paintings perform a ravage of contemporary culture in search of its weak points. In his



Juan Davila's "Hysterical tears", 1984, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

interview with Paul Foss, Davila says that his tendency towards fragmentation, leakage and excess is the result of "a more feminine approach to culture". What he needs is a Hoover.

Dependent, like the artists he copies, on popular imagery, Davila fills his pictures with women bound and often gagged by elaborate lingerie, and muscle-men in tight jeans and various stages of sexual arousal. They are set against corny back-drops of snow-capped mountains, barren wastelands, night-time skyscrapers, and shabby domestic interiors. He makes a show of acknowledging his high art sources, with dutifully numbered lists of stencilled names, often including his own, in a corner of the canvas: so, satiated with Davila's sensationalism, the jaded viewer can play the old art-historical game of trace-the-influence with these mishy-moshy mockeries of Western art.

The paintings in *Hysterical Tears* follow Davila's move from his native Chile to Australia, in 1974. Nelly Richard's tortuous post-structuralist essay, "Love in Quotes", relates this lack of a home to Davila's use of pictorial quotations separated from their original contexts: "transience . . . becomes the model for . . . that intertemporal of referents exhibited in his work as a mode of fragmentation of his cultural and historical body". Davila is so intent on conveying this sense of alienation that no body is left intact. Like a Martian, maddened or mystified by Earth's concerns, Davila approaches both art and sex with a heavy hand, producing awkward art-historical striptease.

He himself is put on display, naked or in drag, engaging in superficial encounters with the work of selected artists. "Hysterical tears" is self-portraiture at its most self-pitying. Big hands emerge from a colourless blur labelled "\$48,000", presumably a painting, and make a grab at Davila, who has donned a saintly expression and a two-piece bathing suit for the occasion. As a woman, the prostrate artist passively resists the temptation of making pictures someone might want to buy—but the type of swimwear he has chosen may indicate that he is torn. Although Davila is often eager to make his privates public, it is hard to make head or tail of him.

Paperback fiction in brief

Patricia Craig

MARGERY ALLINGHAM. *The Fashion in Shrouds*. 316pp. Dent. £3.95. 0 460 02416 7. First published in 1938, the novel in which the Allingham detective Albert Campion (who looks foolish but isn't) attaches himself finally and irrevocably to Amanda Fitton (first encountered six years before in *Sweet Danger*). It is also – quite apart from its crime-and-detection element – a fantasy of the *beau monde*, with Campion's sister Val in the part of the worldly woman, the talented courtier and social success with a true feminine heart. An odd revival for the 1980s, with its old-fashioned, anti-feminist froth getting in the way of the detecting interest.

J. A. CUDDON (Editor). *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories*. 512pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 00 6800 7. This "spine-chilling collection of stories" (as the blurb has it) contains some classics of the genre – "The Rose Garden", "The Old Nurse's Story" – some unexpected oddities like Zola's "Angeline, or the Haunted House", and some interesting recent pieces. It also comes complete with a detailed and erudite introduction. But where is the Elizabeth Bowen story announced on the cover?

DOROTHY EDWARDS. *Rhapsody*. 234pp. 0 86068 275 5. *Winter Sonata*. 245pp. 0 86068 277 3. Virago. £3.50 each. Dorothy Edwards, who threw herself under a train at the age of thirty-one, was the Welsh author of one collection of stories, *Rhapsody* (1927), and one novel, *Winter Sonata* (1928). She was briefly taken up by Bloomsbury after the publication of her novel, moved into the home of David and Ray Garnett, and then fell out of favour. Her literary manner is quirky and deadpan, and effective in a slightly gauche way. (Elaine Morgan, in her introduction to *Rhapsody*, perceptively offers the opinion that "we are not a million miles away from Mr Salteens and *The Young Visitors*.") The stories are about people being invited to stay at country E Houses, men deluding themselves about their attractiveness to young women, pathetic individuals ingratiating themselves with one or other of the partners in a marriage. *Winter Sonata* tells the story, in clear and simple prose, of a singularly bashful post office clerk mooning after a beautiful girl in an English village.

WINIFRED HOLBY. *Poor Caroline*. 255pp. Virago. £3.50. 0 86068 595 0. *Poor Caroline* (1931) was Winifred Holby's fourth novel, and the first in which she tried out the slightly satiric approach that seemed to suit her best. Poor Caroline is a seventy-one-year-old spinster of odd appearance (beads and crimson velvet dresses), inadequate income, and ambitious ideas, whose present purpose is to clean up the British film industry. To this end, a Christian Cinema Company is founded; various muddles ensue, resulting in a sprightly and entertaining book.

ELSPETH HUXLEY. *The African Poison Murders*. 214pp. Dent. £3.95. 0 460 02411 6. First published in 1939, and set in Colonial East Africa, this is a traditional detective novel with an unpleasant first victim, odd behaviour on the part of suspects, and an investigator who gets himself into a pickle before he's through. Plenty of colourful motifs (like the murder committed by means of a poisoned nail inserted into a shoe), and a high level of interest throughout: the assaults on animals are rather hard to stomach, though.

HERMIONE LEE (Editor). *The Secret Self: Short stories by women*. 382pp. Dent. £3.95. 0 460 02295 4. Thirty-two stories, nearly all of them of the highest quality, make up this collection: the time-span takes in Willa Cather at one end and Jayne Anne Phillips at the other; encompassing Doris Lessing, Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark, Angela Carter. Is it a worry that they are all women? Not as far as our enjoyment of the stories is concerned, but

just a little in so far as the objection to "women's anthologies", voiced by Elizabeth Bishop (whom Hermione Lee mentions in her excellent introduction) and others, is still valid. It is difficult to justify a selection procedure based on gender; subtitle a companion volume "short stories by men", and you will raise an outcry.

BETTY MILLAR. *On the Side of the Angels*. 238pp. Virago. £3.50. 0 86068 509 8. Re-issued among Virago's "Classics of the Second World War", *On the Side of the Angels* (1945) considers the glamour of the military idea, and also the purposefulness of feminine lives passed quietly at home. Its central characters are a couple of sisters, one married, the other – a teacher – engaged to a blameless man and drawn to another who nearly lands her in a fix. Just occasionally, Virago's seductive jackets give a wrong impression of the books they cover, arousing expectations that cannot be satisfied by bygone library stock.

FRANK O'CONNOR (Editor). *Classic Irish Short Stories*. 335pp. Oxford University Press. £2.95. 0 19 281918 6. *Ireland's Living Voices*. 236pp. Rainbow. £4.95. 1 85120 010. Frank O'Connor's unimpeachable collection of Irish stories (first published in 1957) starts with George Moore and ends with Elizabeth Bowen; read in conjunction with *Ireland's Living Voices*, it shows how certain qualities – formality of approach, an aptitude for compression, vitality – seem to have disappeared from Irish storytelling. Not that all the "living voices" are distorted or dull; for example, the Rainbow collection (unedited, to its detriment, and not proof-read either) contains work by authors like William Trevor and Benedict Kiely. But some of its authors are pretty awful. There's Desmond Hogan, whose literary style owes a lot to the malapropism ("a lineage which perforated madness and violence"). There's also Linda Anderson, author of a novel called *To Stay Alive*, who gets in with a deadly story called "To Live or Die"; the story has a heroine who takes herself very seriously indeed: "It surprises me to think of how the world teems with people and I have so much love inside me and it just sits there like jewels too good and heavy for daily use." It seems that adolescent earnestness and instability have suddenly become features of Irish writing.

SEAN O'FAOLAIN. *Bird Alone*. 304pp. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 281906 2. "Sin and salvation in an Irish setting" is the phrase Sean O'Faolain applied to this, his second novel, first published in 1936. It deals with a man remembering his nineteenth-century youth in Cork city, and sets out the reasons why he – a builder by trade – has ended up a bird alone. Politics, sexual frustration and the power of the church over individual consciences are the ingredients of Irish life which the author broodingly considers.

MOLLY PANTER-DOWNES. *One Fine Day*. 184pp. Virago. £2.95. 0 86068 587 X. *One Fine Day* (1947) is set in a Surrey village during the summer of 1946. We have a middle-class family, the Marshalls, mother ("Would the sauce bind?"), father (returned from the war) and schoolgirl daughter; various village characters; intimations of social change; and many rich evocations of Englishness. If the book is a little overwritten in places, and a little too insistent in its social contrasts, it nevertheless presents an image of the era as sunny and intriguing as an old copy of *Woman and Home*.

LAURA TALBOT. *The Gentlewoman*. 280pp. Virago. £3.50. 0 86068 533 0. *The Gentlewoman* (first published in 1952, and set during the Second World War) is about a middle-aged governess with upper-crust connections, some Indian bracelets, a punctilious manner and an ungenerous nature. Miss Bolby, who is employed to teach the daughter of a harassed noblewoman, is prey to various small snobberies and resentments; through her, we see how a business life is for those who lack spirit and adaptability.

Irrational areas

Anne Boston

MARIAN ENGEL. *The Tattooed Woman*. 192pp. 0 14 008115 1. KATHERINE GOVIER. *Fables of Brunswick Avenue*. 253pp. 0 14 007578 X. Penguin. £3.95 each.

These two short-story collections are part of a series of Canadian short fiction published by Penguin. Marian Engel's writing reputation was established in Canada on her novels, particularly the award-winning *Bear*; *The Tattooed Woman* is published posthumously. "I have been made to believe in the irrational, the area where, when the skin of logic is pulled back, anything can happen", she wrote in the introduction – adding mysteriously, "Perhaps that is why I attract people who have found the Holy Grail." This is a fair indication of the unevenness in store; a penchant for the surreal, offset by a deft, hard sureness of tone, with occasional startling nose-dives into cute whimsy.

Some of the stories recall the mercurial brightness of Djuna Barnes: like her, Marian Engel is attracted by bizarre aspects of ordinary behaviour; here, too, actions are left to explain themselves. But Engel's territory is most often the wounds left by broken marriages, the lucarne in family relationships. The middle-aged woman of the title story, haunted by her pharmacist husband's love for a young store assistant, secretly tattoos her flesh with a razor. She wants to turn herself bodily into the wise old woman of ancient tribes – "Experience must show, she thought" – but abruptly recants when she realizes her self-mutilation is an attempt to win her husband's pity. "There from Here" is a minimally brief, highly effective sketch of a divorced woman taking her semi-delinquent son to a boarding school he hates, in a hired car she can't afford.

Elsewhere, Engel writes about childhood ("The Smell of Sulphur"); and makes an atmospheric foray into the supernatural ("The Country Doctor"). The narrator of "Madame Hortensia, Equilibriste" is a bright little freak who took to the stage to exploit her deformity.

Also in paperback

RENATA ADLER. *Pitch Dark*. 144pp. Abacus. £1.95. 0 349 10062 4. TLS, July 20, 1984.

RICHARD BRAUTIGAN. *So The Wind Won't Blow It All Away*. 130pp. Arena. £2.95. 0 09 939100 7. TLS, April 22, 1983.

ANTHONY BURGESS. *The Kingdom Of The Wicked*. 390pp. Abacus. £3.95. 0 TLS, May 31, 1985.

ITALO CALVINO. *Mr Palomar*. Translated by William Weaver. 113pp. Picador. £2.95. 0 330 29092 4. TLS, June 29, 1984.

JULIO CORTAZAR. *We Love Glenda So Much And Other Tales*. Translated by Gregory Rabassa. 145pp. Arena. £2.50. 0 09 937030 9. TLS, January 20, 1984.

LAWRENCE DURRELL. *Quinx, Or The Ripper's Tale*. 201pp. Faber. £3.50. 0 571 13954 X. TLS, May 31, 1985.

SHUSAKU ENDO. *Stained Glass Elegies*. 165pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 007966 1. TLS, October 26, 1984.

ALASDAIR GRAY. *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*. 141pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 008424 X. TLS, March 29, 1985.

URSULA HOLDEN. *The Cloud Catchers*. 176pp. 0 413 40330 0. *Eric's Choice*. 142pp. 0 413 55630 6. TLS, October 12, 1984. Methuen. £3.50 each.

JENNIFER JOHNSTON. *The Railway Station Man*. 187pp. Flamingo. £2.95. 0 00 654130 5. TLS, October 5, 1984.

NORMAN LEWIS. *A Suitable Case for Corruption*. 185pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 007592 5. TLS, May 4, 1984.

And "Banana Flies" is, frankly, a mistake. "Let me tell you a story and pretend it's unreal. Let me tell you an unreal story and you pretend it's real. . . . To make it fiction we have to change the names. I sat beside Almond and across from Pear. I am Apple, because I've always wanted to be Eve. . . . The less said, the better. But the inventiveness and originality of the rest repays pursuing.

Katherine Govier's *Brunswick Avenue* is Greenwich Village, the Left Bank before it became fashionable, Earl's Court, anywhere with bedsits in dilapidated houses occupied by young and upwardly mobile artistes, and those with aspirations bigger than their talent. The stories follow the fortunes of some of these transients, mostly young women, from poverty in a single room to marriage, writing "success" and children. Several deal with failures in female friendship: the erstwhile best friend who fails at suicide, as at everything else she attempts; the companion on a trip to Europe, embittered by her single status, who pronounces Cornwall "twee" and won't eat foreign food. In the first story, "Brunswick Avenue", the narrator makes a return trip to the street; meets an old acquaintance, now a single parent for whom it's too late to escape, and realizes that she, not the old landlady, now represents the enemy, her success threatening the rickety lives of those who will never leave.

"There but for the grace of God" is the moral we are presumably intended to draw; but the final effect is less compassionate than patronizing by her pharmacist husband's love for a young store assistant, secretly tattoos her flesh with a razor. She wants to turn herself bodily into the wise old woman of ancient tribes – "Experience must show, she thought" – but abruptly recants when she realizes her self-mutilation is an attempt to win her husband's pity. "There from Here" is a minimally brief, highly effective sketch of a divorced woman taking her semi-delinquent son to a boarding school he hates, in a hired car she can't afford. Elsewhere, Engel writes about childhood ("The Smell of Sulphur"); and makes an atmospheric foray into the supernatural ("The Country Doctor"). The narrator of "Madame Hortensia, Equilibriste" is a bright little freak who took to the stage to exploit her deformity.

DAVID LODGE. *Out Of The Shelter*. 282pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 008375 8. TLS, October 9, 1970.

JOHN MORTIMER. *Paradise Postponed*. 447pp. Penguin. £3.50. 0 14 006928 3. TLS, November 15, 1985.

JOYCE CAROL OATES. *Mysteries of Winterthurn*. 482pp. Arena. £3.95. 0 09 940480 X. TLS, July 20, 1984.

RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA. *The Nature of Passion*. 192pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 008052 X. TLS, December 14, 1986.

SIMON RAVEN. *Morning Star*. 344pp. Granada. £2.50. 0 586 06350 1. TLS, July 13, 1984.

PHILIP ROTH. *The Professor of Desire*. 263pp. 0 14 007677 8. TLS, April 7, 1978. *Goodbye, Columbus*. 221pp. 0 14 006255 6. TLS, November 13, 1959. *The Anatomy Lesson*. 291pp. 0 14 007481 3. TLS, February 24, 1983. Penguin. £3.95 each. *The Ghost Writer*. 156pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 005517 7. TLS, December 7, 1979. *The Breast*. 89pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 1400 7679 4. TLS, March 23, 1978.

JOSEF ŠKVRČEK. *The Engineer of Human Souls*. 571pp. Picador. £3.95. 0 330 29152 1. TLS, March 8, 1985.

DAVID STORRY. *Present Times*. 270pp. Penguin. £3.95. 0 14 007608 5. TLS, May 18, 1984.

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. *The War of the End of the World*. 569pp. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 13961 2. TLS, May 17, 1985. *The Green House*. 440pp. 0 330 29287 0. TLS, September 22, 1986. *The Time of the Hero*. 409pp. 0 330 29288 2. TLS, January 9, 1964. Picador. £3.95 each.

The drilling fields

John Melmoth

JONATHAN GATHORNE-HARDY. *The City Beneath the Skin*. 245pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95. 0 241 11868 9.

Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's novel begins by soothing any unease the reader may be feeling: "be assured that the facts upon which this book is based are true". The problem is that the facts are more staggering than the narration which binds them together. The book begins in 79 AD with the eruption of Vesuvius and the engulfing of Herculaneum (Ercolano). Any point which Gathorne-Hardy might wish to make about Roman society in the first century – for instance that it was unrivaled by any other in brutality, and comparable in luxury to late twentieth-century California – pales in comparison with the terrifying physics of that eruption. When the novel moves into the present and starts to operate on the human rather than the Richter scale, its impact is diminished; Gathorne-Hardy is stronger on vulcanology than on volcanic passions. The novel's crust quakes and is riven by seismic undercurrents of over-writing and melodrama: hands are "as active as a pair of tumbling doves", a swimming pool is "a plump spermatozoa [sic] concentered in the act of swimming", a boozy archaeologist unblushingly confirms "these stones speak to me . . . they cry out".

Alex Mayne, thirty-six, unsuccessfully attempting to hold together a tangle of financial loose ends, visits Herculaneum, half-heartedly researching a film that he suspects will never be made. While there, and despite the fact that it is out of season, he not only meets Catrina, who proves both sexy and supportive, but he also has an original idea about the city beneath the skin. Turning down the chance of a perfectly good career smuggling objects out of the nastier parts of Africa, he invests Catrina's savings in drilling equipment, rents a slum flat in Herculaneum new town and starts to dig for treasure seventy feet below, even as Vesuvius prepares to erupt again and the Camarra try to muscle in on the act.

These improbable exploits implicate a number of more or less minor characters: Eddie

Segal, a cool and bent auctioneer; Thomas Henderson, expert on marble at the British Museum (who opens up a whole sub-plot when he detects a similarity between Alex and his son, Philip, who died of a drugs overdose); Dr Dorothy Schultz, bull dyke American archaeologist; and Doctor Gandolfino, superintendent of the scavi, a pusillanimous top flight academic who talks like a comic waiter: "take it from me . . . is a big waste of time".

Gathorne-Hardy nudges us constantly to think of Alex's surreptitious diggings as a metaphor of some sort. Both Alex and Thomas compare the rescuing of the city from the rock with the work of a sculptor, although this ceases to satisfy the more rigorous Thomas who comes to regard it as "some great novel of lost time still shrouded and awaiting words". Most indefatigable of the significance-hunters is Catrina, for whom the digging is more important than anything they might find. In her view, the "function" of "their love" is "to penetrate into Herculaneum". Exploring the ruined city is a way of entering the subconscious – "they would now discover the buried truth about themselves and about each other".

The City Beneath the Skin misses none of the opportunities for exoticism which its setting affords. Alex and Catrina set up camp in a room decorated with priapic frescoes and statuary, in which context their sexual endeavours obtain gratuitous glamour. The ever-presence of the past also enables Gathorne-Hardy to indulge certain sour juxtapositions of milieu, somewhat in the manner of T. S. Eliot. Periods are mixed: "a large box of Tampax rested on a first-century burnished silver hand mirror . . . there was an Alka-Seltzer carton on the floor under the fine thyphalic table".

The strength of Gathorne-Hardy's social histories of nannies, GPs, public schools, marriage and divorce lies in his ability to collect details which are at once significant and beguiling. Similarly, the best of the stories in his recent collection, *The Centre of the Universe* is *18 Baedekerstrasse*, are instinctively anecdotal. *The City Beneath the Skin* suffers by comparison, being both too extended and too self-consciously a novel. The researched elements – vulcanology, archaeology, the art of the Roman Empire – are better value for money than the attempts to create character or depict adult sexuality.

Stay or return

Robert Irwin

EMILE HABIBY. *The Secret Life of Saeed The Pesoptimist*. Translated by Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor LeGassick. 169pp. Zed Books. Paperback, £3.95. 0 86232 399 1.

In 1948 many Arabs fled their homes in Palestine. In Emile Habiby's novel a young Palestinian Arab, Saeed, successfully recrosses into what has now become Israel. He speedily finds patronage under "a big man of small stature" and is employed by the Israelis as their stooge in the Union of Palestinian Workers, informing against communists. He has an affair with a Palestinian woman, Yuad, who is later deported as an illegal immigrant. He marries another woman, Baqiyya, and has a son who grows up to become a fighter in the Palestinian resistance. After the son is cornered by Israeli troops, both he and his mother make their escape in mysterious circumstances. Later the ever-observant Saeed finds foul of the Israeli authorities himself, and is imprisoned several times. In prison he becomes the centre of a Shakespeare study circle – whose sessions seem to involve his lying on the floor and being kicked in the stomach by guards. The novel ends in 1967 with Saeed's disappearance.

As I have misleadingly summarized it, *The Secret Life* could be taken to be a political novel, whether a polemic or a documentary, one depending on the reader's prejudice. But Saeed's letters to the narrator reveal that the author's attitude to the Arab predicament in the aftermath of 1967 was affected with the assistance of extra-terrestrials with whom he has long been in communication. (He first made contact with

them in tunnels dug by the Crusaders under the port of Acre.) So the novel is fantasy, or perhaps a study in the psychopathology of the dispossessed. But the names of the women – Yuad (Return) and Baqiyya (Staying) – suggest an allegory about the predicament of the Arab in Israel. Much of the novel, however, is wild force, and it is full of irony, slapstick, puns and alliteration, historical, literary and mystical allusions.

An English reader may think perhaps of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*: an Arab reader is more likely to be struck by Habiby's at least partial success in reviving the medieval genre of *Maqamat* (Sessions) Literature. R. A. Nicholson characterized al-Hariri's eleventh-century *Maqamat* as consisting of "excellent discourses, edifying sermons, and plaintive lamentations mingled with rollicking ditties and ribald jests". But al-Hariri and his hardly less famous predecessor, al-Hamadani, centred their narratives on wily rogues. Habiby has broken with this tradition to present us with a rogue who is very unwily indeed. A half-educated simpleton, Saeed the Pesoptimist is a man for his times. He realizes that things could be worse: how lucky that his brother was killed in an industrial accident before he could discover that his wife was going to be unfaithful to him. Equally the Arabs of Acre, faced with expropriation or expulsion, should be grateful that the Israelis have not massacred them all, as Richard the Lionheart did some eight centuries earlier.

The Secret Life was obviously not an easy work to translate. Much of the word-play has been lost, and even where words can be translated, cultural expectations cannot. Footnotes can help here. Even the Arabic edition has them, but though the English version has some notes, it could have done with more.

Short histories

Savkar Altinel

BERNARD CORNWELL. *Sharpe's Regiment*. 301pp. Collins. £9.95. 0 00 221430 X.

With the Peninsular War effectively won and the British Army ready to march into France, Richard Sharpe and his faithful companion Sergeant Harper, veterans of many an Iberian campaign, reluctantly leave for England to find out why the replacements desperately needed by their regiment are not being sent – a mission which leads to their uncovering a major conspiracy and finding themselves in great danger in their outwardly peaceful native land. This is the seventh title in an excellent series, and though the green Rifleman jackets Sharpe and Harper are so proud of may now be worn enough to make Regency bucks sneer, Bernard Cornwell's prose is as crisp, and his plotting as skilled, as ever.

MARGARET GAAN. *White Poppy*. 274pp. John Murray. £9.95. 0 7195 4280 4.

The second volume of Margaret Gaan's Opium Wars trilogy sees the descendants of Charlie Tyson, the hero of the admirable *Red Barbarian*, and his evil rival William Carradine join forces to put into action a "plan of many lifetimes" to rid China of the drug traded in by their forebears; but against them are not only powerful interests but also the greed and corruption of one in their own ranks. A well-researched, well-constructed and well-written novel, occupying central place in a sequence which is at once a major story-telling achievement and as good an introduction to modern Chinese history as anyone who is not a professional Sinologist could hope to find.

PATRICK O'BRIAN. *The Reverse of the Medal*. 256pp. Collins. £10.95. 0 00 222733 9.

On his way from Dover to London after months at sea protecting British whalers from enemy ships off the coast of South America, the valiant but unworried Captain Jack Aubrey makes the acquaintance of a stranger who tells him that peace with France is imminent, and he can therefore make a quick profit by investing in government stocks. This seemingly innocuous tip, however, soon leads to Aubrey's being arrested for fraud, and he has to turn to his close friend Stephen Maturin, the half-Irish, half-Catalan ship's surgeon, naturalist and intelligence agent. This is perhaps not the best of the celebrated Aubrey books, being concerned for nearly half its length with the recapitulation of past adventures and scene-setting. It does, however, eventually manage to get past these preliminaries and pick up speed; and as everything that is said of the amazing Dr Maturin – "Such a range of inquiry, such erudition, such illuminating comparisons, such flashes of wit!" – also applies to Patrick O'Brian, who is always ready with a fascinating fact about the Navy of the Napoleonic Wars or an entertaining discourse on the woes of authors, complete with quotations from Dryden, Smollett and Ovid, it is good to have him as a shipmate even when the passage is less than smooth.

DORRIT WILLUMSEN. *Marie*. Translated from the Danish by Patricia Crampton. 213pp. Bodley Head. £9.95. 0 370 30880 8.

Swiss-born Marie Anne Grosholtz was raised by her Uncle Curtius, the owner of a Paris waxworks, came to know his radical friends, such as Robespierre and Marat, and the French royal family in her capacity of wax modeller and art teacher, became adept at the gruesome task of producing likenesses of the victims of the guillotine after the Revolution, and was already well known by the time she married a fortune-hunter and assumed her

more familiar name of Madame Tussaud. Such a life could have served as inspiration for a lurid blockbuster: it has inspired Dorrit Willumssen, who is, among her other accomplishments, a poet, to write a poet's novel which chronicles, with a wonderful economy and a wealth of arresting images, a talented but inexperienced young woman's encounters with art, friendship, love and death. A subtle and beautiful book.

DUDLEY POPE. *Galileo*. 258pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95. 0 436 37470 0.

Neither the unexpected withdrawal of his commission following the Restoration, nor the absence of most of his fleet on another mission, can prevent Caribbean-based Royalist buccaneer leader Ned Yorke from deciding to make a bold attempt to seize a bullock-carrying Spanish galleon that has run aground off the island of St Martin. The enterprise soon sails into trouble as Yorke's friend and second-in-command Sir Thomas Whetstone is captured by the enemy and sentenced to be garrotted. An exciting story, told with some panache, but must the two main protagonists make inane jokes all the time like a pair of overgrown schoolboys? "You are so – how do you say? – whimsical", comments a French acquaintance. Facetious is more like it.

DAVID REES. *The Hunger*. 189pp. GMP. Paperback, £3.95. 0 85449 046 6.

In rural County Galway in the 1840s, caring English landlord Anthony Altarnun and his servant and lover Michael Tangney find themselves forced to cope not only with the potato famine but also the hostility aroused by their relationship in the small community they are trying to save from starvation; although for one of them at least there is ultimately a triumph of sorts. The plot is capably handled, but the view of Irish history that comes across is simple-minded, the characters, beginning with the gay couple themselves, are little more than stereotypes, and the constant underlining of the "right" attitudes towards love and pleasure rapidly becomes irritating.

GRAHAM SHELBY. *The Edge of the Blade*. 278pp. New English Library. £9.95. 0 450 06115 9.

When Sir Geoffrey Falkon of Tremellion Castle is murdered by his avaricious son Ranulf after deciding to donate his entire fortune to the Crusaders, Ranulf's younger brother Baynard resolves to deliver the sacks of gold coins to the Holy Land himself, and thus embarks on a journey which takes him and his two companions, Guthric, the Constable of Tremellion, and Quilton, a young poacher, via a number of Mediterranean lands, and various encounters with pilgrims, bandits, lepers and pirates, to the besieged city of Jerusalem. The plot clearly exists only to provide an excuse for the travelling, but as the latter takes in so much that is colourful and engaging, it is hardly possible to argue with that.

PATRICIA WENDORF. *Blanche*. 377pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95. 0 241 11744 5.

Patricia's Wendorf's latest novel continues the story of the Greyfaul family, begun in *Lark-sieve*, charting the rise and rise of the illiterate but profoundly ambitious Blanche who, following the death of her hated father in 1881, leaves Somerset for London to become first a scullery-maid, and then an artist's model, before her physical charms enable her to realize her dream of finding a rich man who can dominate and exploit. Plot, characterization and background are all thoroughly professional, but why such a talented writer, who began her career with intelligent "straight" fiction, should have decided the mantle of Judith Krantz is worth aspiring to is a mystery.

Striking conquests

Fergus Millar

MICHAEL H. CRAWFORD
Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic: Italy and the Mediterranean economy
355pp. Methuen. £65.
0416 12307

This remarkable book represents the first attempt ever made to integrate what we know of Roman coinage and its use into the wider context of the political, cultural and economic history of the Mediterranean world in the Republican period. The reference to use should be stressed in particular. Work on Roman coinage has tended to be dominated by catalogues, whose aim is the essential preliminary of sorting out the types, legends and dates of the coins minted in gold, silver and various non-precious metals (usually called "bronze" for short). A natural consequence of this focus has been a concentration on the artistic and verbal character of each issue: that is, what visual representations and what written legends it carried. Since both the artistic level and the sheer variety of visual symbols and verbal messages on the coins are highly impressive, it is natural that so much attention should have been devoted to the conscious intentions which they evidently embodied. Even if the interpretation of coins in terms of "propaganda" has sometimes been taken to naive lengths, and even if it often remains uncertain what public was addressed, or whether it really noticed, such work remains of value.

This major new book is best understood as the product of three earlier works of Michael Crawford's. First, *Roman Republican Coin Hoards* (1969), which supplies the essential basis for examining the actual circulation and use of Roman and non-Roman coins, as the hoards reveal it for different places and at different times. Second, his article in *Journal of Roman Studies* 1964, "Money and Exchange in the Roman World", arguing that the Roman state minted coins solely as a means of making its own expenditures (payment of troops, erection of public buildings) and without regard to the need for a medium of exchange among the civilian population. Third, his two-volume *magnum opus* of 1974, *Roman Republican Coinage*, in one respect a catalogue of the standard type, but going beyond that in various ways, not least in discussing the volume of Roman minting at successive periods, and in relating this primarily (as above) to military needs.

The aim of the present work is to use all this material in a wider historical context, starting from an undeniable generalization whose significance has not yet been sufficiently emphasized in historical analyses of the period: "At the beginning of the Hellenistic period there was no coinage at Rome and a wide variety of coinages was in use elsewhere; by the time of Augustus, not only was the whole of the Mediterranean world under Roman rule, most of it was taxed by Rome and used the Roman monetary system and Roman coinage."

One great virtue of the book is that it reproduces all the main types of Roman and non-Roman coins, at their original size, not amassed and segregated in serried ranks on pages of plates, but on the text-pages where they can be seen simultaneously with the relevant discussion. Appreciation of the infinite variety of coinage in different metals would of course have been made even more vivid if the photographs could have been in colour. As it is, the display of the coins is extremely effective, even if often just a little mistier than might have been hoped. It would have been easier for the reader, it is true, if numbering had been used to relate the individual coins in a group to the corresponding technical descriptions given underneath. In practice, however, its absence is rather beneficial, in forcing the user both to read the technical descriptions and to look closely at the coins, in order to be quite clear which is which.

Rather more of a problem is that this truly historical view of the evolution and function of Roman coinage has not rid itself of the off-putting technicalities of numismatics. Take the description of the Roman coinage system, as it was in the early part of the Hannibalic war, just before the introduction in about 211 BC of

the *denarius* system (a system based on a silver coin, the *denarius*, worth ten of the standard bronze coin, the *as*): "The as no doubt still in theory weighed ten ounces at the outbreak of the war, but in practice it weighed rather less... the weight standard was reduced first to a semilibral level, with an as in theory of six ounces, then to a triental and finally to a quadrantal level." It is not impossible to sort out what is being said here, but as it stands the sentence is only formally in English. Much more problematic, however, is the basis of the weight-standards involved, which must be equally baffling to English readers accustomed (still) to a pound (*libra* in Latin) divided into sixteen ounces (*uncia* in Latin, meaning, however, a twelfth), and everyone else, accustomed to weights in grams. What will either group of readers understand when they come to the statement "The metallic unit of early Rome was of course a pound of bronze, an as; as the remained the Roman monetary unit, despite successive reductions in weight after its appearance in the form of coin, down to c 141"? Is this a purely verbal equivalence (*libra* in Latin = *as* in Latin)? If not, if a "pound" of bronze can have a variable real weight, what is being said? Clarity would have been helped enormously by some definitions at the beginning, and systematic use of equivalences in grams, the only weight standard which is universally intelligible, across both space and time.

However, these are quibbles, which could easily be satisfied in a second edition. It is more important to emphasize both the range of material in the book, and the array of challenging propositions which it presents. From among these one might select the following: first, the survey of the different cultures, economies and varying levels of literacy of the regions of Italy in the early Republican period. Then there is the overall dating of non-Roman coinage in Italy, showing that it was virtually unknown as late as the fourth century BC, except for the Greek cities of the south, and for Campania. Non-Roman coinage-production in Italy was an extensive and rather short-lived phenomenon, closely associated with the Punic wars (and probably with the necessities of

Poet and principes

Francis Cairns

HANS-PETER STAHL
Propertius, "Love" and "War": Individual and State under Augustus
412pp. University of California Press. £29.75.
0520 051661

Hans-Peter Stahl goes straight to the core of his topic: he will deal "with a poet's difficulty in raising his unique personal voice in a publicly uniform and therefore homogenising environment". The tension between literature and politics in the Roman elegy written in the reign of Augustus, Stahl's "love" and "war", is generally recognized as one of its major concerns. But there is no agreement about how to interpret it. One view is that the elegists were more or less (Ovid less) friendly to the Augustan régime. But they exploited their personae as elegiac lovers to simulate an unengaged and risqué stance which, by making their writings more acceptable to the public, in turn made the elegists more effective as "propagandists" for the régime. Another view is that the elegists were true dissidents, expressing real opposition, open or covert, to Augustus. Between these two extremes there are many intermediate approaches and sophisticated restatements of the question, including Stahl's, which goes some way, but not all the way, towards the second.

Stahl approaches his topic through detailed examination of individual Propertian elegies. He warns initially that his final position will be reached by a "long road". The road is also hard: there are 303 packed pages of text, and seventy-two of even more closely packed notes. Although the preface states that the book may be read without the notes, the scholarly reader - and this is a book for scholars - does require them.

The texture of the book is in part dictated by

military service), and already reduced again to a handful of places, mainly Greek, by the early second century. Then there is the curious question of the two earliest issues of coins on which the name of the Romans appears, both belonging towards the end of the fourth century BC: one with "ROMANO" in Latin, and one struck at Naples and naming the Romans in Greek. Possible contexts are the aftermath of the treaty with Naples of 326, and the building of the Via Appia from Rome to Capua, which tradition assigns to 312. Since the historicity of this is not wholly certain, and since we do not know how mid-Republican Rome would have managed and paid for (if it did pay for) a major public project like this, all such connections have to be hypothetical. But they make sense, and combine to present a coherent proposition.

Other major turning-points are the system based on silver *denarii*, mentioned above; the emergence in the second century of a coinage in Spain which was in one sense of a local Iberian character and in another Roman, having (hypothetically) the express function of being paid to the Roman armies there; the effective absence of Roman coins from the circulating media of the Greek world until the first half of the first century; the large Roman issues of around 100 BC, which may be associated with colonization in northern Italy (itself, however, a fact which is not universally accepted as such); and the enormous issue of Roman coins at the time of the crucial war against the Italian allies in 90 BC: "more coinage was produced in 90 than in any other year in the history of the Republic". It was perhaps a pity in this context not to have said more about the last resurgence of non-Roman coinage in Italy at this moment, in the coinage of the allies who fought against Rome, a subject of which there is no up-to-date treatment. But Crawford does bring out the fundamental financial consequence of what was, in real terms, the victory of the allies over Rome, and the concession to them of the Roman citizenship. Up till that moment the communities of Italy had had to pay the troops whom they supplied for Roman wars. From now on they were all Roman troops, paid from the

state of play in the field. Many of the elegies treated in detail by Stahl (for example, I.1, I.6, I.7 and I.9, I.21 and I.22, II.1, II.7, IV.1 and IV.6) have been discussed in recent decades in long periodical papers. A major commentary by Paolo Fedeli on Book I appeared in 1980; and Gerhard Petersmann's monograph on the *Monobiblos* was published in the same year. Stahl interacts constantly with secondary literature up to his cut-off point (1983). The results are often valuable; but inevitably some of his verdicts convince more than others. There is, too, an intrinsic difficulty about working in this way from particular interpretations to general theory. Even the reader who mastered every detail of every chapter could find himself barred from Stahl's general conclusions by disagreement over particulars.

This is why, although I find attractive certain aspects of Stahl's general approach, especially his resistance to wholesale emendation and transposition, his sympathy for the structures of the elegies and his generally judicious attitude to minor problems, my overall reaction is to realize that our conclusions about the minutiae of ancient literature are dictated more by our overall interpretations than the reverse, and to feel that here is where the real discussion should lie.

Much depends, for example, on whether the voice we hear is that of the "real" Propertius or of a variegated and mutable persona. If the former, it does make sense to talk about the poet's views and their development; if the latter, the discussion must focus on the poet's handling of conventions, genres etc. Another question is whether the elegiac poet (real or persona) has any standing when he discusses politics or morality in his poetry. That the elegiac poet has a high political-moral status will hardly be denied by any reader of Virgil's *Aeneid*. But is elegy a sufficiently serious form for its statements to have such weight? And is the elegiac poet, however much more than a comic-pathetic example of how not to succeed in life and influ-

ence people? The elegiac world portrayed in Paul Veyne's *L'Élégie érotique romaine* (reviewed in the TLS, October 4, 1985) would give it no credentials beyond that of elegant entertainment; and a writer's popularity and both Propertius and Ovid clearly did enjoy popular success - should not be confused with his public importance. Again, did Augustus really want all the poets directly or indirectly under his influence to write epics? When for example Horace turned up at the palace in 23 BC with the presentation copy of his first collection of *Odes*, are we to imagine him receiving a kindly but stern Augustus with something like: "Well, I suppose they are very nice *Odes*. Quintus, but I should have been much happier if they had been an epic, that one Agrippa asked you to write, for example..."? Perhaps we should give a highly sophisticated literary emperor more credit for recognizing the merits and political utility of poetic variety.

One last point should be challenged. Stahl's description of the Augustan age as public uniform and therefore homogenizing. This description might fit better the age of Tiberius or Nero or the Flavians. But the 30s and 20s BC when much of the best Augustan literature was produced, were not such an environment; and historians have long ago abandoned that distorted portrait of Augustus created in the late 1930s which depicted him as an ancient blend of Hitler and Mussolini. There was in fact enormous diversity in the first two decades of the empire. The *principes*, of whom Octavian/Augustus was only one, competed for literary, poetic and philosophical protégés, as for military glory, offices and estates; and the life of Tibullus shows that a first-rate poet had a real alternative to imperial patronage. In any case the best poets were themselves men of influence and influence, and all we know of relations between them and their patrons points to a two-way traffic, political as well as literary. The *principes* may have listened to the poets more often than we realize.

Making out the Way

A. C. Graham

BENJAMIN I. SCHWARTZ
The World of Thought in Ancient China
490pp. Harvard University Press. £23.50.
0674 961900

Some Western explorers of Chinese thought prefer to think of the Chinese as like ourselves, others do not. One tendency is to see in Chinese thought, behind all the divergences, an inquiry into universal problems, through ideas which transcend cultural and linguistic differences; the other is to uncover, behind all the resemblances, distinctions between key words which relate to culture-bound conceptual schemes and to structural differences between Chinese and the Indo-European languages. Benjamin I. Schwartz's *The World of Thought in Ancient China* is a very distinguished representative of the former point of view. The book is a lucid, accurate, agreeably written and comprehensive survey, based on a long familiarity with the whole of the literature of Chinese schools of thought from the second century BC, and its great strength is its range of comparisons with other traditions.

Chinese thought has never before been contemplated with quite this breadth of vision. The great initial burst of 500-200 BC is presented against the background of the other explosions of Karl Jaspers's "Axial Age", in Greece, Israel, Iran and India. Schwartz notes, for example, that the mission of Confucius to recover a Way lost since the decline of the Chou dynasty stands out as exceptional against this background; although "there is a common belief that most ancient civilizations believed in lost Golden Ages", in all others of the Axial Age this nostalgia, when discernible at all, is "marginal and often different in kind". This insight may provoke one to the unexpected thought that in this respect the culture which ancient China resembles is modern Europe up to 1700, similarly dominated by the memory of Greece and Rome, primitive Christianity, and the Egypt of Hermes Trismegistus, with even Newton supposing himself to be rediscovering truths which would have been known to Moses, Pythagoras and Moschus the Phoenician; in Europe and China alike the assurance that a Way once known must be rediscoverable has been a great stimulus to originality.

On the other hand, Schwartz observes, China does resemble other Axial Age cultures in an assumption easily overlooked because it is so foreign to us: some at least of the Chinese thinkers share with "the Hebrew prophets and even Aristotle a diagnosis of civilization which may associate a concern with technological invention... not so much with 'progress' as with war and immoderate luxury and display", so that even the Mohists, who defend innovation and are specialists in the advancing technology of military engineering, take it for granted that the basic inventions required for human welfare have already been made.

Schwartz also makes some interesting comparisons of basic concepts. On the supposed difference between Western and Chinese notions of the primal stuff, he dismisses "the constantly repeated cliché that in the West matter is static while *ch'i* is dynamic", objecting that the conception of matter as static belongs only to a few Greeks and to Europe since the seventeenth century, and that the primal stuff of Thales and Anaximenes was as dynamic as *ch'i* - a good point against those of us who look out for differences rather than similarities. With the same scepticism towards conventional contrasts, he argues that in his proportioning of the "religious" and the "this-worldly", Confucius is not so very different from Moses, Plato and the *Upanishads*.

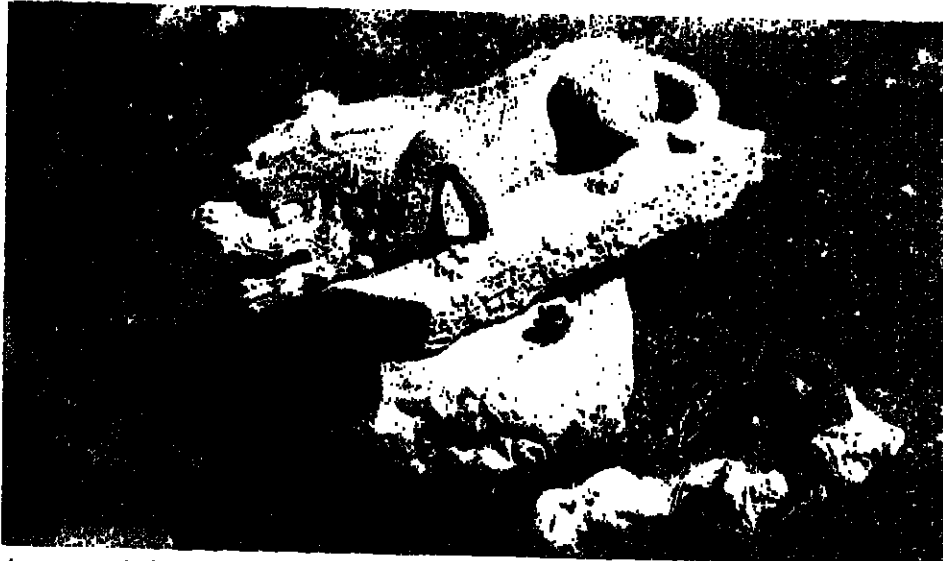
Another of Schwartz's comparisons is between Hobbes and Mo-tzu, who likewise describes a primeval war of all against all:

In ancient times when the people originated, in the age before there were punishments or government, the word went "For every man in the world a different morality." Consequently for one man there was one morality, for two men two, for ten men ten, with the multiplying of men what they called "morality" multiplied too... The world was in as much disorder as the beasts and birds. They understood that the world being in disorder originated from having no ruler, and therefore selected the wisest and most acceptable man in the world and set him up as emperor... It is only because the emperor is able to unify morality throughout the world that the world

is brought to order.

Some of Schwartz's most far-reaching conclusions are drawn from this passage in *Mo-tzu*. He sees here a pre-social world of "atomized individuals", "self-enclosed egoists", without any "immanent tendency towards morality", without even the kinship bonds recognized by Hobbes. He infers that the Mohists never solved the problem of how morality could emerge at all from universal conflict, and suggests that this failure led to the "egoism" of the Yangists and to the Legalist model of man as governable only by reward and punishment. But one must object that here Schwartz overlooks a crucial difference, that Mo-tzu speaks not of conflicting interests but of "different moralities (*yi*)". It is not obvious that the "atomized individual", the "self-enclosed egoist", was ever conceived of in ancient China. What looks like egoism in Chinese thought seems to be a relative selfishness rather than an absolute detachment of self from all ties with others. The only "egoist" in *Mo-tzu*, a certain Wu-ma-tzu, says "I love men of Tsou more than of Yueh, of Lu than of Tsou, of my own district than of Lu, of my family than of my district, my parents than the rest of my family,

rather than a science of politics: the Legalists "seem closer in spirit to certain 19th and 20th century social scientific 'model builders'". Weber classed Chinese bureaucracy as "patrimonial", but "Shen Pu-hai's 'model' of bureaucracy is much closer to Weber's modern ideal-type than to any notion of patrimonial bureaucracy", closer than anything in Graeco-Roman political thought. He finds, however, one flaw in the inhuman rationality of Legalism, "Shen Tao's principle of the mystery of authority". It is a paradox that "in a system which attempts to demystify tradition, authority to be authority must ultimately in some sense be based on a pre-existent mystery". Here we may again wish to point out a difference, but this one tells in Schwartz's favour, eliminating the flaw. The word he employs to translate "authority" is *shih*, "situation", a position of strength or weakness in relation to the surroundings, used for example of strategic position on the battlefield. The ruler's *shih* is his key position in the social structure; the concept is as "scientific" as anything in Legalism, as may be seen in the common formula describing a course of action or natural process as inevitable because "the situation causes it to be so".



A water spout in the Tatar City, Beijing. The picture is reproduced from A Photographer in Old Peking by Hedda Morrison (260pp. Oxford University Press. £14.95. 0 19 584056 9).

myself than my parents, because I judge by nearness to myself"; Mo-tzu in replying refers to this as "your *yi*". Even the Yangist "Taking life as basic" in *Lü-shih ch'ün-ch'ü* classes life contrary to *yi* along with subjection and disgrace, among kinds of life which are worse than death. The "Valuing morality" chapter of *Mo-tzu* has an argument for preferring *yi* to life itself, that although men value their own survival above any possession they will "kill each other fighting over a single word, which is valuing *yi* above themselves".

This argument may provoke the reflection that the "self-enclosed egoist" is by no means a clear concept, even perhaps that it could pass as unproblematic only in a culture as individualistic as our own. One's first reaction is no doubt to answer that the insulted man is acting not on a moral principle but from offended pride. But his pride is stirred because he accepts a social judgment that to refuse to fight would be cowardice and that it is bad to be a coward; and on what egoistic calculation could he prefer death to shame as merely an unpleasant emotion? We seem here to touch a deep difference between Chinese and modern Western presuppositions about self-interest and morality. Mo-tzu assumes that there is no such thing as an interaction between individuals, whether competitive or co-operative, which does not compel them to recognize *yi*; the cause of the primeval anarchy is that *yi* does not harmonize but divides, until it is unified in a commonly accepted moral code.

Schwartz is impressed by the modern look of the Legalist conception of the state as a system explicitly likened to a weighing machine, designed to attract by reward and deter by punishment without any appeal to morality, with inflexible laws and a bureaucracy with fixed tasks, working by itself irrespective of the personal qualities of the ruler. He entitles one chapter "Legalism: The behavioural science", and observes that where ancient China approaches our conception of the scientific there are "more anticipations of contemporary Western social sciences than of the natural sciences". Han Fei has often been likened to Machiavelli, but Machiavelli taught an art

Schwartz's inclination is to trust in the autonomy of ideas; he dislikes behaviourist psychology, the belittlement by sociologists of the influence of thinking individuals on society, Marxist reduction of ideologies to reflections of class interests, denials that the Chinese can be thinking about Being or about universals if the language lacks the corresponding words. It is on these topics that he most often takes issue with other scholars. He is penetrating and judicious in his criticisms, except in dealing with the analytic philosopher Herbert Fingarette, whose *Confucius: The secular as sacred* has revitalized all our thinking about the sage. He recognizes Fingarette's work as "stimulating and highly suggestive", but is hindered by a lack of sympathy for analytic philosophy in general; thus his objection to Ryle's *Concept of Mind* limit "it is not however made clear what a disposition is" implies unawareness that, for Ryle, talk about dispositions is a shorthand for talking about dispositional statements, the function of which is made clear by elucidating their logical relations with occurrence statements. Fingarette claims that Confucius has much to teach a moral philosopher who is trying to shake off certain long-standing Western dichotomies such as "descriptive/emotive" and "subjective/objective". He calls attention to a notable difference between Confucius and many thinkers both Western and Chinese, that he does not speak of man as divided into inner and outer compartments, with the value of the outer deriving from the inner; when he mentions the inner it is in speaking of "looking inward" at one's own conduct in contrast with looking outward at others.

This is the proper approach to ethical concepts for anyone who holds, like Ryle and Fingarette, that for example the difference between a parrot's speech and a man's is only superficially explained by the man having thoughts inside him and the parrot not, since whether speech is intelligent has nothing to do with whether it is merely incipient as verbal thinking or is spoken aloud. According to Fingarette, Confucius conceives his cardinal virtue *Jen* (commonly translated "benevolence") not as a separate effort to be good, but as a

directed force operating in actions in public space and time and having a person as initial point-source and a person as the terminal point on which the force impinges" (Schwartz quotes from this on p 75). Schwartz not unnaturally prefers to describe *Jen* in a more familiar vocabulary, as "subjective", an "inner quality", an "inner disposition". This preference would not matter if he had fully grasped that, in refusing to enclose *Jen* on the inside of the man, Fingarette is not expelling it to the outside. The result of this misunderstanding (as with some other sinologists who have responded to Fingarette) is that his criticisms stray off into irrelevant demonstrations that Confucius did know that there are important things going on inside us.

Fingarette has stirred up much controversy by his denial that Confucius has the concept of moral choice. Confucius uses the metaphor of the Way but not the crossroads (as used for example by the later Confucian Hsün-tzu: "Yang Chu weeping at the crossroads said 'Isn't it here that you take a half step wrong and wake up a thousand miles astray?'"), he assumes that you either follow the Way or miss it out of blindness or weakness. This is especially remarkable since Confucius certainly does not present his Way as a set of rules with absolute authority which we have only to obey. Schwartz objects to Fingarette with some justice that he treats moral choice as "choosing between 'value systems' or creating one's own values", although, for all those in the Western tradition who understand free choice as "freedom to choose between the known good and the known evil" it is "in no way different from Confucius' choice, between following the way and straying from it".

But although Fingarette's formulations may expose him to this rebuttal, the issue is much deeper. There are many morally sensitive Westerners who, like Confucius, make nothing plainly identifiable as a judgment between alternative courses except in choices of means; as for their ends in life, they find their tastes and inclinations shifting with fuller knowledge and wider experience, and in retrospect judge a former preference ignorant, immature, astray from the Way which has now become clearer to them. Confucius presents the stages of such a development from the age of fifteen, when he became intent on learning, up to seventy, when he could "follow the heart's desires without transgressing rule". We are in the habit of classing the maturing of inclination with judgment between ends under the general heading "choice of ends", even though the shifts were spontaneous and the agent did not envisage and ponder alternatives. If, like Schwartz, one does not question the classification, then of course it follows that moral choice is fundamental to Confucius.

But it is Fingarette's denial which opens up new prospects of understanding and learning from Confucius. One may reflect, for example, that by insisting on the classification we drag Confucius into another Western dichotomy, "is/ought", which his thinking escapes. To put it in Western terms, coming to know interacts causally with spontaneous inclination; either we let inclination change with new knowledge or cling to present inclination by refusing to know; that one ought to know implies that one ought to let inclination shift, as a causally necessary condition of coming to know. On this line of thought Confucius is inviting us into an unfamiliar moral universe where all values are derivable from the value of wisdom, all imperatives from "Know!" combined with the facts about the conditions of coming to know. I dwell so long on Fingarette because Schwartz's book deserves to stand for some time to come as the most authoritative account of ancient Chinese thought for the Westerner interested in the history of ideas, and there is some danger that his extensive criticisms may tempt readers to underestimate the one book on Confucius which is philosophically stimulating.

China Press and Publishing Directory 1985, published by Modern Press, Beijing, and Longman (360pp. £30. 0 582 97819 X), contains over 2,300 entries. Covering 296 publishers, more than 500 booksellers and 1,700 newspapers and periodicals, each entry gives the full name in English, Chinese and Pinyin.

Contentious splendour

J. R. Maddicott

CHRIS GIVEN-WILSON
The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, politics and finance in England 1360-1413
327pp. Yale University Press. £22.50.
0300035705

In medieval England the king's household made an ambivalent contribution to his power. On the one hand, it was the visible expression of royal splendour, patronage and authority: a point of convergence for display and entertainment, the allegiances of friends and retainers, and the making of policy. On the other, it remained a potential flashpoint. The cost of the household might cause trouble; a capricious distribution of royal favour to its members might bring latent factions into the open; decisions taken covertly within its walls might seem to pre-empt or ignore the more publicly sanctioned policies of council or parliament. Most political conflicts between 1100 and 1485 contained a "court and country" element, sometimes springing from rivalries within the household, but more frequently from a confrontation between the household and its critics.

Chris Given-Wilson's admirable book spans a relatively short period in the later Middle Ages when, to an unusual degree, the household held the centre of the political stage. He first defines the household as an institution, given shape by its organization, staff, costs, movements and relations with the king. Precise, clear and firmly grounded on the sources,

this is a definitive account. Earlier historians, perhaps more familiar with the ways of civil servants than of courts, sometimes judged the household's importance exclusively by these institutional criteria. It was a department of government, often set against the "national" department of the Exchequer, equipped with seals through which the king could wield a private executive authority, and drawing on cash resources which might enable him to rule without external constraint. Yet, as Given-Wilson shows, the household's real political weight owed nothing to this phantasm of "household government" and everything to the particularity of a ruler and his circle. It was not official, but personal.

This was especially true of Richard II's reign, which is the focus for this book. Then, as in the preceding and succeeding periods, the household owed part of its unpopularity to its size, its expense and its failure to pay for its food supplies. Even in the 1380s, when Richard's reliance on a narrow group of chamber knights brought it a new sort of opprobrium, the issues between the court and its parliamentary critics were largely the traditional ones. It was only in the 1390s that the king moved on to new ground and began to develop and extend his household in ways which constituted a challenge to the political conventions and ultimately contributed to his fall. Not only was there a very large increase in the size of the household, partly no doubt to satisfy the king's taste for magnificence, but also a comparable increase in the number of knights and esquires whom the king retained for life.

Perhaps the most original section of the book traces the evolution of these "king's

knights" (a term of art), first from the military knights of the household and then from the smaller and more exclusive group of chamber knights which had begun to emerge under Edward III. The king's knights differed from both these bodies. Their service to the Crown was not primarily military, like that of the household knights, nor conciliar, diplomatic and domestic, like the chamber knights, but local. Together with the esquires whom the king also retained, they numbered some three to four hundred by the end of the reign. Richard intended to use them to underpin provincial loyalties, to fill the local offices on which royal executive power depended, and to influence the working of parliament. In the parliament of 1397 more than a third of the shire representatives were king's knights.

In a general way parts of this picture are familiar. Yet Given-Wilson's achievement is to do more than give statistical precision to what has long been known in outline. The quantitative information on Richard's retaining policy makes a qualitative difference to our view of the king. He appears less as a tyrant than as a politician concerned to win support among the substantial gentry of the shires; less a frenetic despot than the calculating founder of an oligarchy much more broadly based than the traditional ruling circle of king and magnates. Why then did he fail? This problem is to some extent side-stepped in the present book. But it is clear that Richard's policies divided the shires and, as we know from the work of others, that he was unremittingly vindictive and hostile to those whom he held suspect. The extension of the household into the counties, the court's appropriation of the country, meant

that the localities were now potentially open to a large factional division between the favoured and the unfavoured, of the kind which had sometimes threatened the court itself. These tensions helped to bring Richard down.

The concerns of this book are almost exclusively, perhaps austere, political. For such matters as court culture and court religion the inquisitive will have to return to the writings of Gervase Mathew and K. B. McFarlane. On the perennially fascinating subject of Richard's own tastes and aesthetic interests, it throws little new light. Like the administrative historians whom he supersedes, the author has a temperamental inclination towards the records rather than the chroniclers, to whose heavy evidence he is sometimes undiluted; the story of Richard's £20,000 tunic, for instance, is relegated to a footnote. He is too rigorous a historian to be drawn into the breath generalizations at which scholars balk and by which history lives. Richard's attempts to subvert the two institutions, parliament and the local gentry, which from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth prevented the development of an absolutist monarchy in England, surely deserve a more general comment.

But when set against the range of subjects which Given-Wilson instructs and informs, these are quibbles. On the technicalities of household finance and accounting, on lives and retaining, on the king's clerks, and on much else, he has new and good things to say. His book is likely to become the first point of call for any undergraduate wanting to add sparkle to a tired essay on late fourteenth-century politics: an indignity perhaps, but also an achievement.

One goes up, one goes down

R. A. Fletcher

ROBERT I. BURNS (Editor)
The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror: Intellect and force in the Middle Ages
232pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £19.40.
0691054517

James I of Aragón (1213-76) and Alfonso X of Castile (1252-84) can be known to us more intimately than almost any other medieval European monarchs. James's autobiography, the *Llibre dels fets*, proudly chronicles his conquests of Mallorca and Valencia and with vivid candour reveals the aspirations and appetites of this chivalric crusader. Alfonso, traditionally known as "the Wise", though "the Learned" is a more appropriate translation of *el Sabio*, has left us no such directly personal document. But the literary works that he sponsored, remarkable alike for amplitude and diversity—law, history, poetry, translations from the Arabic on such various topics as astrology, jewellery and chess—are almost as revealing as James's memoirs of how the king looked upon his world and thought about his role within it. The archival resources from the Aragonese kingdom are heavily as abundant as those which survive from thirteenth-century England. In a stream of books and articles over the past twenty years or so Robert I. Burns, the editor of this collection of essays, has used to good effect those which relate to the conquest and resettlement of Valencia and its hinterland. The royal registers of Castile have perished but the documentation surviving mainly in ecclesiastical archives is almost unmanageably bulky and has so far defeated a succession of would-be biographers of King Alfonso.

Except for the small tributary state of Granada, the reconquest of Spain from the Muslims was completed under the direction of these two kings. James I and Alfonso X wrestled with common problems in their attempts to ease the strains—institutional, religious, economic, social—which the process of reconquest had tightened. (No one in the thirteenth century reflected that the whole enterprise might have been a folly.) James was markedly more successful of the two. He was more of a realist than his Castilian counterpart, a better administrator, and not to be deflected from

his purposes by scatter-brained schemes like Alfonso's crazy attempt to become Holy Roman Emperor. Furthermore, he presided over and could profit from a Catalan mercantile economy in the midst of buoyant expansion. By the end of his reign the Aragonese dominions formed the major power in the Mediterranean world and an intricate commercial network was controlled from the counting-houses of Barcelona. It was a parting of the ways. Castile lacked both good fortune and good management. Its economy suffered from the imprudent fiscal expedients of Alfonso's government and remained dangerously committed to a single primary product—wool. The king's administrative and legal reforms misfired, leaving the country worse governed, if anything, than it had been before. Alfonso X's reign ended in circumstances of harrowing misery, when he called in the Moors of north Africa to help him suppress the rebellion of his son, Sancho, whom he had disinherited.

With such promising material to hand one might expect that no work devoted to their rulers could be dull. Yet several dull books about Alfonso X and James I have been written, and of Professor Burns and his team of fellow-symposiasts it may be said not that they have produced another but that they have exploited the opportunities open to them with quite the vitality for which the reader might hope. Worthy and competent though the individual essays are, for the most part they lack sparkle. Joseph F. O'Callaghan discusses Alfonso X's disastrous economic and financial policies, while Robert A. Macdonald attempts to relate his legal works to the politics of his reign. James A. Powers surveys the place of town militias in both Castilian and Aragonese campaigns. Archibald R. Lewis makes some unconvincing suggestions about James I's southern French policy and Jill R. Webster on his autobiography in the context of the developing literature of medieval Catalonia. The most rewarding piece is Thomas N. Bisson's characteristically thought-provoking essay on the institutional background of James I's dominions: it is also, sadly, the shortest. Six essays are sandwiched between an introduction and conclusion supplied by the editor. An interest in each king grows, the bibliographies at the end of a year on further reading. Let us hope that the flood will wash up works as well as a somnolent produced as, but rather more

World enough and time

Graeme Forbes

DAVID LEWIS
On the Plurality of Worlds
276pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25 (paperback, \$8.95).
0631139931

Many of the classic problems in philosophy involve what are known as "modal" concepts, the concepts of what is possible and what is necessary, what could have been otherwise, what must be as it is, and what would have been if... Thus the problem of free will is the problem of whether, given all the antecedents of some deliberately chosen human action, there is any sense in which the agent in question could have acted otherwise. The problem of causality is the problem of whether there is any sense in which the brick's striking the glass necessitates the shattering of the glass that immediately follows, or whether all there is in the world is merely the temporal succession of the two events. Examples could be multiplied; but it is indisputable that the main reason for the contemporary resurgence of interest in these, and many other, great issues in metaphysics (and also philosophy of language) has been the success of philosophers and logicians in recent decades in providing a rigorous semantic analysis of modal notions. Applications of the ideas which emerged from this enterprise have made the last twenty years or so a golden era in analytic philosophy.

One of the best and most influential applications of this sort was the book *Counterfactuals*, by David Lewis (1973). This book contained not only a famous account of counterfactual conditionals—conditionals of the general form, "if it had been that so-and-so then it would have been that such-and-such"—but also an equally famous, or perhaps infamous, credo about the semantic apparatus that philosophers were widely employing in work on these topics. It is characteristic of this apparatus that statements involving modal operators like "it is possible that" and "it is necessary that" are reconstructed as statements about "possible worlds". To say that something is possible is to say that there are possible circumstances (worlds) in which it is the case. To be precise, "it is possible that such-and-such" becomes "there exists a possible world where such-and-such". How is this reconstruction to be understood? What are possible worlds and what is meant by saying that such things *exist*?

All parties are agreed that a possible world, or possible universe, is a complete alternative to the way things actually are. But this does not help much in understanding their nature. Professor Lewis's startling proposal was to take the phrase "there exists a possible world" completely at face value. Among the things that exist there is the actual world and all the things which are part of it: the Milky Way, the planet Mars, the Statue of Liberty, etc. But according to Lewis, this is only a tiny part of reality (albeit one that is of more importance to us than any other part): all the other possible worlds and the things which are their parts are also to be included in what exists. Donkeys differ in such a way that talking donkeys would have arisen. If it could have happened, this means there is a possible world where it does happen, a world where donkeys talk. And this is to say that there are talking donkeys, every bit as real as the mute variety with which we are more familiar; it's just that there aren't any talking donkeys around here.

When one first encounters Lewis's realism about possible worlds and their contents, it seems an extravagant, perhaps absurd, doctrine. As Lewis himself wrote, the most common reaction to his position that he encountered was an incredulous stare. But a literature soon grew up, sparked by Lewis's views as much as anything else, which concerned itself with the interpretation of possible worlds semantics. Most writers have tried to explain such locations as "there exists a possible world where..." as a way to make them consistent with the idea that only the actual world and its contents exist, and they have often supplemented their positive claims with attempts to refute Lewis's own. Thirteen years later, *On the Plurality of Worlds* is Lewis's apologia. It contains a formidable defence of his own position and

sustained, searching criticism of a range of proposals which have been offered as more palatable alternatives.

The book has four parts. In the first, Lewis gives a careful statement of his position and argues that realism of the kind he espouses has the same kind of explanatory fruitfulness as does the positing of unobservable entities in empirical science: there is a range of problems for which Lewis has substantial solutions in virtue of his realism about worlds and their contents, a fact which is in itself an argument for realism to the extent that other views are overall less successful in dealing with these problems. Lewis then goes on in the second part of the book to respond to some of the by now well-known objections to his realism, and in the third part to attack various alternatives to it which other philosophers have advanced. Finally, in the fourth part, he pursues some questions about the fine detail of his position, to do with matters concerning "transworld identity" and "essential" properties.

Let me briefly describe one problem with Lewis's position. If there are other possible worlds every bit as real as the actual world, what demarcates them from the actual world? How can you tell where one world ends and another begins? Lewis says that two objects or events are parts of the same world if and only if they stand in some spatio-temporal relation to each other: one occurs before the other, say, and at some determinate spatial remove. By contrast, there are simply no facts about the spatio-temporal separation of objects or events which exist in distinct possible worlds, and this is constitutive of the distinctness of the worlds.

Does this view have trouble construing apparent invocations of crossworld spatio-temporal relations, as when one says reproachfully to a friend "You could have got here sooner than you actually did"? Perhaps Lewis's "counterpart theory" helps here, in combination with quantification over times: there is another world where one's friend's counterpart arrives at a time of that world which is a counterpart of a time of our world earlier than the time at which that friend in fact arrived; perhaps, indeed, the spatio-temporal isolation of other worlds is not compromised even if those worlds have identically the same space-time as our world.

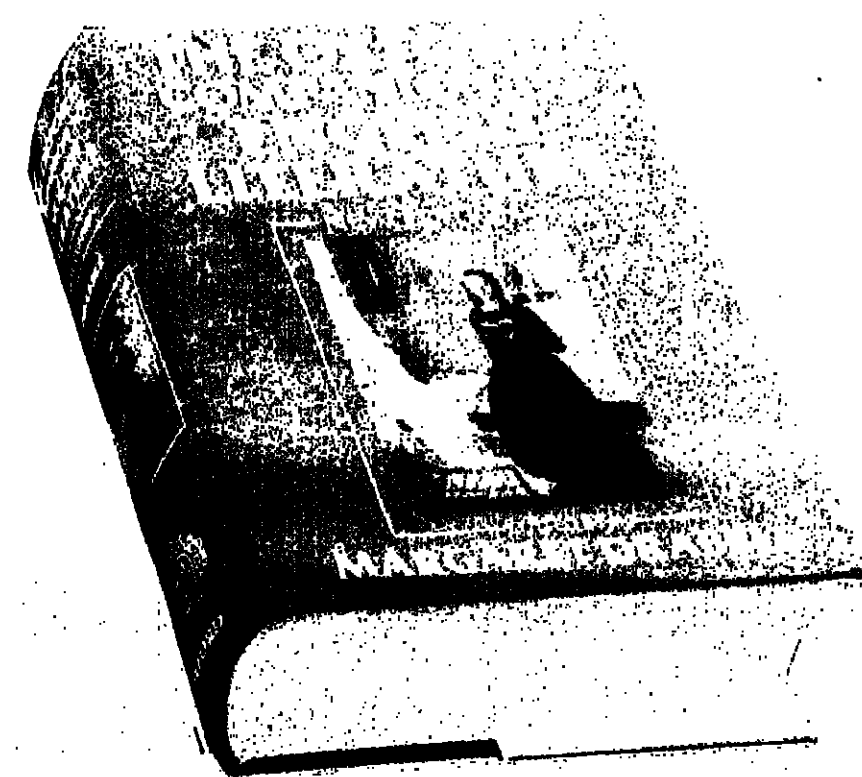
But more problematic is the epistemological question. We take ourselves to have a considerable amount of modal knowledge, knowledge about what is possible and what is necessary. According to Lewis, such knowledge is knowledge about how things are at other worlds spatio-temporally isolated from the one we inhabit. Does this not render our capacity to acquire modal knowledge truly wondrous? Lewis has this to say about how we come by our knowledge: "we try to think how duplicates of things already accepted as possible—for instance, because they are actual—might be arranged to fit the description of an alleged possibility. Having imagined various arrangements... we consider how they might aptly be described." Let us concede that this is accurate enough. Can we really regard these exercises of the imaginative faculty as a source of information about the nature of systems spatio-temporally isolated from us? Lewis makes much of an analogy with mathematical knowledge; but it is not clear that this helps. For whether or not one wants to insist that the information channel in the case of mathematics is mediated by causal relations, the Platonist view that the subject-matter of mathematics is radically isolated from us makes mathematical knowledge completely mysterious. It is not much of a defence of Lewis's realism about possible worlds that the epistemological mystery it generates for modal knowledge is merely no worse.

The Philosophy of Right and Wrong: An Introduction to ethical theory by Bernard Mayo (176pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Paperback, £4.95. 07102 0859 6) offers, according to its publishers, a guide for undergraduates and the general reader. In twelve chapters, Professor Mayo discusses such topics as determinism, naturalism and intuitionism, emotivism, relativism, morals and religion, form and content, morality and self-interest, together with four aspects of prescriptivism: the legal model, natural law, rational autonomy, and various objections and replies to them.

We liked it so much we thought you should have one

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TLS April 26 1985



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Revenants and revivals

Julia Briggs

E. NESBIT
Tales of Terror
 Edited by Hugh Lamb
 192pp. Magnet. Paperback. £1.50.
 0416518303
NAOMI LEWIS after E. NESBIT
A School Bewitched
 Illustrated by Errol le Cain.
 Blackie. £6.95 (paperback, £2.25).
 0216916860
E. NESBIT
The Deliverers of Their Country
 Illustrated by Lisbeth Zwenger
 Neugebauer Press/Picture Book Studio;
 distributed by Element Books, Shaftesbury,
 Dorset. £5.50.
 088700057

The publication of E. Nesbit's *Tales of Terror* and *A School Bewitched* (adapted from Nesbit's story "Fortunatus Rex and Co" by Naomi Lewis) suggests that publishers are looking beyond her well-established favourites for something less familiar. Both books appear to have been packaged as if expected to sell according to their particular sector of the market rather than on the strength of her name alone. Hugh Lamb's selection from her ghost stories, *Tales of Terror*, is well judged: some creepy exercises in grand guignol, tales of strange drugs and horrific experiences, as well as more traditional ghost stories such as "Man-Size in Murbit", in which memorial effigies come to life and crush a woman to death – a plot inspired by Prosper Mérimée's classic, "La Vénus d'Ille". Less capable is his introduction: he dates her earliest ghost stories from the 1880s, whereas they were actually published in 1893.

A School Bewitched is intended primarily as a picture book, and Errol le Cain's illustrations are as stylized, delicately coloured and full of comically inventive touches as ever. In this respect they are a good match for Nesbit's text – which is exactly what this book does not provide. "Fortunatus Rex and Co.", as it was originally called, is one of her whitest fairy stories. It relates, among other events, how King Fortunatus founded a speculative building company and began to put up the "greedy yellow caterpillars" of suburban villas that were so rapidly eating up the leafy country lanes of Edwardian South London. (In her

indignation at their ugliness, Nesbit could easily overlook her socialist concern that slum-dwellers should be rehoused.) "Fortunatus Rex" blends contemporary commerce and problems of logic and arithmetic with fantasy and fairy-tale convention. It displays the sophisticated humour and delight in absurdity which characterize her best work: when all Miss Fitzroy Robinson's pupils disappear, she dons a gown "neatly made of sackcloth – with an ingenious trimming of small cinders sewn on gold braid – and some larger-sized cinders dangled by silken threads from the edge of her lace cap". All such picturesque details have been excised from this version. Admittedly, as it stands the story is too long and complicated for a picture book, and some of its jokes are now obscured by the passage of time, but Naomi Lewis's adaptation lacks humour and her additions and substitutions are heavy-handed: when Nesbit's evil magician gets his legs back out of the astrolabe,

he joined himself together, and went off full of earnest resolve to live and die an honest plumber. "My talents won't be quite wasted", said he; "a little hanky-panky is useful in most trades."

Rewritten, this is just as long, but has lost its ironic turns of phrase:

He in turn promised to try some respectable new trade, being a plumber perhaps. "My talents won't be wasted", he said with a wicked look. "A little magic is always useful, especially in plumbing."

The rediscovery of minor works is often welcome, but the rewriting of a minor classic is a questionable practice, especially when the original is out of print, as "Fortunatus Rex" is. Lisbeth Zwenger has produced a delightful picture book using Nesbit's *The Deliverers of Their Country* (from her *Book of Dragons*). Here each page of the (authentic) text faces a full-page, delicately coloured illustration, animated by a sense of movement, space and evocative period detail – there are even faint reminiscences of the drawings of the Edwardian Punch artist, Phil May. Lisbeth Zwenger's work has undergone an impressive process of change and development. From the outset she has used rich and subtle watercolour tones to create a vivid atmosphere, but the line work in her early illustrations tended to be decorative rather than informative. In this book, her drawings reveal with a new economy her grasp of structure, architecture and gesture. Not since her original illustrator, H. R. Miller, has E. Nesbit been so well served.

and *Riddley Walker*. The charm is there, but it fails to carry the performance.

Roy Foster

GEOFFREY PATTERSON
The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg
 Deutsch. £5.95.
 0233 97878 X

Geoffrey Patterson's version of Aesop's fable, *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg*, offers – as might be expected from the author of those agreeably informative books *All About Bread*, *The Story of Hay* and *The Working Horse* – a picture of rural contentment. Twenty-three clear pen and chalk drawings show us a charming farm (English c1910) which has, besides the plump and elegant goose, cows, pigs, hens, a cat and a dog and a cart-horse. The farmhouse, "A pink cottage on a sunny hilltop", boasts a stupendous kitchen range and when faced with wealth, Henry and Hilda are tempted by a shire horse and a fine new cart. The details help to flesh out the tale, adding interest and drama (the killing of the goose takes place at dead of night). We sympathize with the failed millionaires as the moral is succinctly stated: "We were happy before we got rich and greedy," said Hilda sadly. "All the golden eggs have given us is unhappiness, and our goose is dead."

Elizabeth Barry

Madame Guillotine: The French Revolution by Simon Farrell and Jon Suthead, which was reviewed by Philip Thody in the TLS of July 4, is also available in hardback (Deutsch, £4.95. 0 233 97868 2).



"But one morning their mother was busy preparing some new dragon poison to lay down in the cellars, and their father was bandaging the hand of the boot-boy which had been scratched by one of the dragons", a domestic interlude during a plague of dragons, in E. Nesbit's inventive tale, illustrated by Lisbeth Zwenger, of how Effie and Harry, with the help of St George, saved England from the ill effects of a hot, dry spell.

Delineating the decades

Keith Jeffery

AMANDA CLARKE
Growing Up in the 1920s
 07134 50525
NANCE LUI FYSON
Growing Up in the 1970s
 07134 51092
 72pp. Batsford. £7.50 each.

The illustrations on the front covers of these volumes make an interesting contrast. That for the 1920s depicts a number of young ladies keenly listening with headphones to *Children's Hour* on the wireless; technology in the service of mankind. (Indeed, as is made clear in Amanda Clarke's excellent volume, one of the most characteristic features of the 1920s was the way in which enthusiastically propagated and widely-spread technological innovations transformed life during the decade.) On the front of Nance Lui Fyson's volume about the 1970s there is a female young person displaying four of the Queen's Silver Jubilee souvenirs selected by the Design Council: a plate, a mug, a T-shirt and a shiny plastic jerkin. Flashy design, self-congratulation and ephemeral consumer goods seem aptly to sum up that decade. There is none of the technological excitement of fifty years before. British scientific achievement is not illustrated until page six, where we find Sir Clive Sinclair peering intently into one of his pocket television sets, trying no doubt to catch some glimmer of a profit.

Amanda Clarke tells us quite a lot about people's home life in the 1920s. There are revealing pictures of the insides of private houses, although some are accompanied by over-directive captions. One is encouraged to compare the interior of a comparatively prosperous working-class home in Bethnal Green unfavourably with that of a "destitute" family whose "living conditions are horrifying". That may be so, but while the former has merely a few china pots and an immaculate aspidistra for decoration, the eight framed pictures on the walls of the latter indicate vitality and spirit. Such comparisons of people's homes are not possible in the 1970s volume. The only domestic interior shows part of a Habitat-style kitchen dominated by a man in an apron with a carving knife in his hand. This is on a page containing sections on "sex and contraception", "co-habitation" and "What is 'manhood'?" The photograph was chosen to illustrate the erosion of sexual stereotypes, of which, of course, the macho male chef is one of

the most persistent.

According to these books, there have been some odd developments over the half-century covered. While in the 1920s football was the most popular sport, and many people also participated, by the 1970s it had apparently disappeared altogether, apart from a lad in South Wales who remarks that "You used to play football if you weren't that good at rugby. There is, however, a photograph of a man damaged by soccer fans – presumably engaged by the absence of their sport from 1970 Britain. Amanda Clarke has a chapter, "Contry Life", which stresses the impact of modernization on farms and rural areas generally. How things have changed in the countryside since then is not at all clear since Nancy Lui Fyson makes no reference at all to rural waters. Indeed, her book is strikingly metropolitan and, especially with regard to the illustrations, confined almost entirely to the southeast of England. Amanda Clarke, by contrast, displays a slight bias for the English Midlands. Neither book can be said fully to cover Great Britain.

Both these *Growing Up* volumes contain a lot of information and stimulating illustrations. They work quite well as individual books. Amanda Clarke gives a more complete picture of her period than does Nancy Lui Fyson, although Fyson's text is enlivened with direct quotations from people who grew up in her period. As part of a series they are less successful. It would have helped the readers to make sense of changes over time if the publishers had insisted on at least some central topics along the lines of those in the 1920s volume. Nothing, however, in the 1970s can match the bizarre 1920s photograph in which a sinister bandaged man wearing a richly embroidered Fu Manchu outfit is allegedly teaching four middle-class ladies to dance the Charleston. What on earth can "the 12 to 16-year-old reader" make of that?

The Legend of Odysseus by Peter Corbett, the most recent title in Oxford University Press's "Rebuilding the Past" series (78pp. £7.95. 0 19 9170665 7), retells the story of Homer's *Odyssey* in five main episodes: "Days of a Girl", "Days of Death", "Days of Sorrow", "The Great Adventure" and "Homecoming". Interspersed with the latter narrative are sections giving the background to the Trojan war. Archaeological information is also provided, with maps and photographs, including discoveries made in 1984 and 1985.

Sales of books and manuscripts

H. R. Woudhuysen

Christie's and Sotheby's sales at the end of last month were both very successful, each realizing just under one million pounds. On June 25, Christie's sold printed books and manuscripts (see TLS June 20), some of which made prices well above their pre-sale estimates. The surprise of the sale was perhaps a heavily glossed Italian manuscript containing extracts from Cicero and the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* of Sallust. This was catalogued as c1400 but was in fact considerably earlier in date; having been expected to go for at most £2,000, in the event it was bought by a private collector for £27,000. Two other manuscripts had equally surprising results. The same collector paid £19,000 for a manuscript dated March 1, 1425, of Cicero's *Orations Septem*, written at Florence or Pistoia for the humanist Sozomeno de Pistoia (estimate £3,000–£5,000), and Quaritch bought a fourteenth-century English manuscript of the *Sphera* of Johannes de Sacrobosco, with an early fifteenth-century commentary on it. This elaborate and intriguing book had been estimated to fetch £5,000 at most, but went for £30,000. Other manuscripts did not contain such surprises. A private buyer paid £15,000 for the early fifteenth-century Book of Hours, written possibly for the use of Limoges (estimate £15,000–£20,000); the later Book of Hours produced at Ghent or Bruges in the last quarter of the fifteenth century went to Tulkens of Brussels for £36,000, slightly under its lower estimate of £40,000; likewise Kraus bought the Swabian manuscript of Jacobus de Thermano's *Belial* for £24,000 (estimate £30,000–£40,000) and paid £15,000, the lower estimate, for the attractive English Chronicles of the second half of the fourteenth century, which contained near-contemporary portraits of Edward III, the Black Prince and Richard II, as well as a very early picture of a school room; the late fifteenth-century manuscript of *Le Roman de la Rose* went to a private buyer for £31,000 (estimate £30,000–£40,000).

Prices for printed books were more consistently above their estimates. Three editions of *La Fontaine* bound by Derome le Jeune, Bozarian (the Pixerécourt extra-illustrated copy) and Derome Père made £19,000 to Maggs, £25,000 to a private buyer (both estimated at £9,000–£12,000), and £32,000 to P. Beres of Paris (estimate £10,000–£15,000). The demand for top-quality French items in this part of the sale was very high: Bromer Books paid £8,000 for a collection of fifty-two "Almanachs Microscopiques", published between 1768 and 1849 (estimate £2,000–£3,000) and the attractive extra-illustrated colour plate book *Le Sacré de Napoléon*, 1806, went to a private buyer for £26,000 against a higher pre-sale estimate of £10,000. Two early printed books did particularly well: the copy of the *Ballet Comique de la Roynie*, 1582, in seventeenth-century vellum, fetched £25,000 to Beres (estimate £10,000–£15,000), and the famous *Hypnerotomachia Polophilli*, 1499, with the same estimate was bought by Haas for £22,000.

Yet another episode in the extraordinary story of the Philipps library came to a close on June 26 and 27, when Sotheby's sold the private collection of Lionel Robinson. In 1946, with his brother Philip, Lionel Robinson bought the residue of the vast assembly of printed books and manuscripts made by the temperamental and eccentric bibliomane Sir Thomas Philipps during the last century. Robinson's own book collection contained many items once owned by Sir Thomas Philipps (including early photographs of him with two of his manuscripts), and was particularly strong in material relating to travel and the Americas. The top price in the sale was reached by one of the earliest books printed in America, Alonso de Molina's *Vocabulario en la Lengua Castellana y Mexicana*, issued from Mexico by Juan Pablos in 1555. This copy came originally from the convent of San Juan de Teotihuacan, near Mexico, famous for its pre-Aztec relics, and was in the Philipps collection at Middle Hill and the Ashburnham library. Sotheby's did not publish a pre-sale estimate for this humble but very rare little book, but were expecting it to go for around £12,000–£15,000; at the auction Kraus paid £180,000 for it.

Other maps and books relating to travel and exploration did well, even if they did not make six figures. David Samwell's inventively titled *Narrative of the Death of Captain James Cook... and Observations respecting the Introduction of the Venereal Disease into the Sandwich Islands*, in its first separate edition of 1786, which is one of the rarest items relating to Cook, was bought by Quaritch for £18,000.

The first section of the sale consisted of general printed books, some of which were of particular interest. The only recorded perfect copy of a Missal of the Use of Evreux, Paris

November 16 1527, printed on vellum and illuminated throughout, was bought by Chavreuil for £52,000; a contemporary inscription suggests that this book may have been produced as the result of a specific commission by the Cantor of Evreux Cathedral, rather than as a commercial publishing venture. Two other early printed books were equally attractive. An Aldine Vergil of 1514, printed on blue paper, with initials in gold on black panels, patterned with tendrils in silver, fetched £14,000 to Whitty against a higher pre-sale estimate of only £2,500, while a magnificent copy of the first edition of Velleius Paterculus, Basle 1520, annotated by Pope Paul III, in a very fine Roman olive morocco gilt binding of c1550–5 by Maestro Luigi, went to Turner for £16,000. Paul III – Alessandro Farnese – was the patron of both Titian and Michelangelo and this beautifully annotated volume is a testament to the refined taste of mid-sixteenth century Roman culture.

Other association copies had rather mixed fortunes. A copy of Nicolas Vignier's *Theatre de l'Antechrist*, [La Rochelle] 1610, with a contemporary inscription claiming it had belonged to Sir Walter Raleigh was bought privately for £600 against a lower estimate of £1,000; the book also had the signature of Francis St John, which, since the St Johns had dealings with Raleigh, enhanced the authenticity of the book's provenance. Henry VIII's copy of William of Ockham's *Dialogus: Compendium Errorum Johannis Papae XXIII*, (Lyons 1494–5), a stray from the Old Royal Library, went for £2,800 to Quaritch (estimate £2,000–£3,000). R. Schwing paid £1,600 for the copy of Cicero's *De Officiis*, Amsterdam 1623, which Prince Rupert of the Rhine owned when he was thirteen years old (estimate £400–£500).

Weinreb bought the Colbert copy of the important source book for Italian theatre history, Nicolo Sabbatini's *Practica de fabricar Scene, e Machine Ne Teatri*, Ravenna 1638. This is an extremely rare work of which only one other example is known to have been sold at auction this century: the Robinson copy went for £9,500 (estimate £5,000–£7,000). Finally, Maggs paid £2,400, against a higher pre-sale estimate of £700, for an equally rare example of libertine literature, *The History of the Human Heart: Or, The Adventures of a Young Gentleman*, 1749, "published in the same year as, and very much in the style of, John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*". None of these prices include the buyer's premium.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Violet Hunt (1866–1942), novelist, companion of Ford Madox Ford, hostess at South Lodge in Kensington; reminiscences, letters of the period 1907–19 when she knew Ford, Pound, Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis; also photographs, present whereabouts of paintings by or of her; for a literary biography.

Barbara Belford.
 Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027 USA.

Orvald Barron, "The Londoner", journalist, herald and FRSA: any information, but especially a photograph of Barron when young, and a copy of *The Butler in Bohemia* (Henry Drane, 1894), written jointly with E. Nesbit. *Horace Hornel*, "John Street", later drama critic for *The Observer*: any information, especially about his life before the First World War and his secretarial work for E. Nesbit and H. G. Wells.

Hugh Bellingham Smith, painter: any information about his early years and Lewisham background, but especially the whereabouts of his painting "I'm Hungry, Mother". All three for a biography of E. Nesbit; her novel, *The Marden Mystery*, and any letters or further information about her are also sought.

Julia Briggs.
 Hertford College, Oxford OX1 3BW.

Arthur Latham Perry: prominent American economist in the latter half of the nineteenth century; any information on contacts with Henry George or with British economists and writers on land policy and free trade.

Roger Bolton.

Department of Economics, Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267, USA.

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Altman, Dennis. *AIDS and the New Puritanism* 780
 Anis, Martin. *The Moronic Inferno: And other visits to America* 785
 Black, David. *The Plague Years: A chronicle of AIDS, the epidemic of our times* 786
 Brandt, Allan M. *No Magic Bullet: A social history of venereal disease in the United States since 1880* 786
 Bristol, Michael D. *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian culture and the structure of authority in Renaissance England* 790
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